

ENGLISH THOUGHT

IN THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

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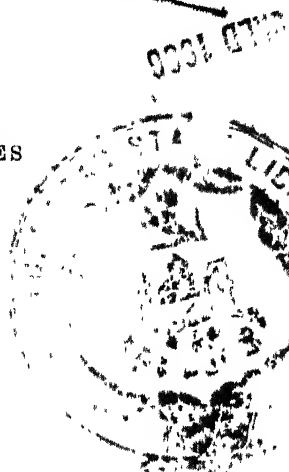
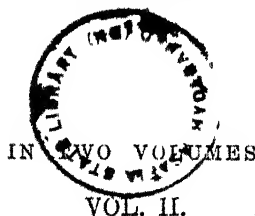
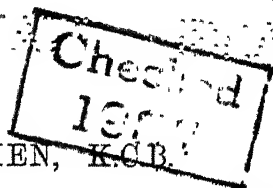
HISTORY OF ENGLISH THOUGHT

IN THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BY

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ENGLISH THOUGHT

IN THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

CHAPTER IX.

MORAL PHILOSOPHY.

I. INTRODUCTORY.

1. THE different religions of the world tell us, each in its own fashion, what is the plan and meaning of this universe. Thence true believers may infer what is the best method of employing our brief existence within it. We ought to be good, say all moralists, and the questions remain, what is meant by 'ought' and by 'goodness,' and what are the motives which induce us to be good? Theology, so long as it was a vital belief in the world, and preserved a sufficient infusion of the anthropomorphic element, afforded a complete and satisfactory answer to these questions. Morality was of necessity its handmaid. Believe in an active ruler of the universe, who reveals his will to men, who distributes rewards and punishments to the good and the evil, and we have a plain answer to most of the problems of morality. God's will, so far as known to us, must determine what is good. We are obliged to be good, because, whether from love or from fear, man must obey his Creator and preserver. Nor does the enquiry into the nature of our moral sentiments naturally suggest itself. Men who live under a visible monarch do not speculate as to the origin of the sentiment which makes them obey his laws. Their loyalty and the fear of his power are sufficient reasons; and it would never strike them that any

special faculty was needed to produce dread of his vengeance or an enthusiastic reverence for his goodness. So long, therefore, as the older theological conception of the universe is unhesitatingly accepted, the only moral enquiry which is likely to flourish is casuistry, or the discussion as to the details of that legal code whose origin and sanction are abundantly clear.

2. But wider speculations as to morality inevitably occur as soon as the vision of God becomes faint; when the Almighty retires behind second causes, instead of being felt as an immediate presence, and his existence becomes the subject of logical proof, or belief is refined into sentiment. If the old system of government disappears, what is to take its place? The prohibition of murder is no longer uttered by a visible Deity from Mount Sinai. Why, then, should we not commit murder? and how do we know that it is wrong? Hell no longer yawns before us; what punishment has the murderer to dread? This sentiment of disapproval survives the clearly divine character of the prohibition. What, then, is its meaning and origin? In England attention had been recently called to these important questions by Hobbes, the keenest and most audacious of all contemporary speculators. Throughout the seventeenth and the first years of the eighteenth century he represented the evil principle to moralists as well as to theologians. The two classes were indeed one. The whole theology of the eighteenth century has a specially moral turn. Religion was regarded far less as providing expression for our deepest emotions, or as a body of old tradition invested with the most touching poetical associations, than as a practical rule of life. This preoccupation with the direct moral bearing of theology gives a prosaic turn to the writing of the day; but, in fact, this aspect of the great problem was of vital importance. How could order be preserved when the old sanctions were decaying? Can a society of atheists be maintained? was a question put by Bayle, and taken up by Shaftesbury. It was nothing more than an epigrammatic form of a question, to which it was of the deepest importance to find an answer, and which was rightly discussed with an eagerness tending rather to cast into the shade the more poetical aspects of religion. How, to put

the question less bluntly, should morality survive theology? Various answers were given in England by various schools of thought—by Clarke, Wollaston, and Price, by Shaftesbury, Butler, and Hutcheson, by Hartley and Adam Smith, by Locke, Hume, Tucker, Paley, and Bentham. What was the nature of the solutions suggested? and what relation do the various theories bear to each other?

II. THE INTELLECTUAL SCHOOL.

3. That which comes first in the order of thought is represented by the writers generally known as the intellectual school of moralists. Its leading representatives are Clarke, Wollaston, and Price. The first two names have already encountered us in the deist controversy. Price belonged to a later generation. He was born in 1723, the year preceding Wollaston's death, and six years before the death of Clarke. He was more conspicuous in political than moral or theological controversies, and is remembered chiefly as the inventor of the younger Pitt's sinking fund, and as affording the occasion of one of Burke's most brilliant invectives against revolutionary principles. His 'Review of the principal Questions and Difficulties in Morals' was first published in 1758, before he had taken part in political discussions and become the friend of Priestley and Shelburne. His writings are of interest as illustrating the connection, so often noticed by Burke, between revolutionary theories in politics and the *a priori* doctrines of metaphysicians. The advocate of the most mathematical view of morality naturally became the advocate of the indefeasible rights of man in politics. The absolute spirit is the same in both cases. His philosophical speculations are curious, though they hardly possess high intrinsic merit. His book on morality is the fullest exposition of the theory which it advocates; but the theory was already antiquated; and Price, though he makes a great parade of logical systematisation, is a very indistinct writer. It is often difficult to discover his precise drift, and the discovery does not always reward the labour which it exacts. Clarke's theory is contained in his 'Sermons on Natural and Revealed Religion,' and Wollaston's in his

'Religion of Nature Delineated.' Both of these books have a reference to the deist controversy, with which the first is principally occupied. The theory which they expound was accepted by the whole school of which Clarke was the most conspicuous leader. We have already been led to notice it in the history of the deist controversy, and it is simply the application to ethical speculations of the metaphysical system which dates from Descartes. A brief examination will sufficiently indicate the main cause of the rapid decay of a doctrine which had so little influence upon the main problems of human life.

4. The starting-point is the identification of God with nature. The Almighty is not with these philosophers the ruler of a universe, in some sort independent of him, or external to him, but the first cause of all things. He moves the stars and directs the course of a bubble. The moral as well as the material universe is absolutely dependent on his laws. Men like Hobbes and Spinoza, who dared to push their logic to its legitimate consequences, saw that the most trifling and transitory phenomenon must be ascribed as distinctly as those which, in our language, are most important and lasting, to the action of an omnipotent and omniscient Creator. It matters not how many links intervene between the earthly end of the chain perceptible to our senses and the heavenly end which is in the immediate grasp of the Creator. He who, with absolutely infallible knowledge, has present to his mind the remotest ramifications of the infinite series of causes and effects, guides the raindrop, or moves the hand of the murderer as distinctly as if he directly intervened at the moment. If, then, 'law' means the same thing when we speak of moral and natural laws, it would seem that morality is annihilated by this conception. 'Fish,' says Spinoza, 'are determined by nature to swim; and big fish to eat little fish, and therefore it is by the highest natural right that fish possess the water, and that big fish eat little fish.'¹ Whatever is, it would seem, on this showing, is in the strictest sense of the word right. A murderer obeys a natural 'law' as much as a saint; a 'Borgia and a Catiline' are as much the products of nature as a shark or a St. Paul. If, in short, the moral law expresses simply the

¹ Spinoza, 'Tract. Theologico-Politicus,' p. 252.

will of the legislator, and the legislator is nature, everything which happens is, by the very definition, in conformity with the law. To break the law is not wrong, but impossible.

5. Spinoza's method of escaping the difficulty need not be considered, for though his name is often quoted by the English writers of the time, neither opponents nor followers appreciated his position. Hobbes's writings, on the contrary, were, as I have said, the most potent stimulant to English thought in the last half of the seventeenth, and even during the first half of the eighteenth, century in England. He had, indeed, fewer disciples than antagonists; but the writer who provokes a reaction does as much in generating ideas as the writer who propagates his own ideas. Hobbes, as his opponents understood him, identified the moral with the positive law. That is wrong, he said, which the sovereign forbids; that is right which he allows. Hobbes indeed declared that the 'laws of nature' are immutable and eternal: but they do not become binding until the commonwealth has been instituted; and the sovereign has the power of defining their application.¹ It follows that the moral standard varies according to time and place; for that which is wrong in Turkey may be right in England. His precise meaning need not here be discussed. The doctrine in its extreme form is that which later English moralists sought to impugn, and of which they considered Hobbes to be the chief representative.

6. The particular form of the theory which commended itself to Clarke—for the skill of metaphysicians has woven doctrines substantially identical into various forms at different periods of speculation—follows from the fundamental assumptions of the metaphysical school, from which he was an offshoot. The mathematical universe in which he believed consisted of two elements; on one side was matter with its primary qualities, or, in other words, the objects of sense stripped of all qualities except those of which the mathematician takes cognisance; and, on the other, the hierarchy of spirits from the divine to the human. All other qualities were merely the modifications raised in the spirit in consequence

¹ See 'Leviathan,' pt. i. chs. 14, 15.

of the mysterious action and reaction between itself and matter. The reason was the faculty by which the invariable relations between these ultimate facts were perceived; whilst the senses presented us with a shifting phantasmagoria of unrealities. To prove, then, that morality was not arbitrary and variable seemed to him to be the same thing as proving that it belonged to those eternal and immutable relations, and not to the sphere of observation, where the accidental and the essential were indistinguishably blended. The foundation of his argument for revealed religion was a proof that there was an unalterable natural law, to which revelation provided a necessary supplement. Clarke attacks Hobbes as asserting that 'there is no such real difference originally, necessarily, and absolutely in the nature of things; but that all obligation to God arises merely from his absolutely irresistible power; and all duty towards men merely from positive compact.'¹ In opposition to this view, some of the consequences of which he exposes with great clearness, he sets up his system of mathematical morality. He that wilfully refuses to honour and obey God is 'really guilty of an equal absurdity and inconsistency in practice as he that in speculation denies the effect to owe anything to its cause, or the whole to be bigger than its part. He that refuses to deal with all men equitably' makes the same mistake as 'he that in another case should affirm one number or quantity to be equal to another, and yet that other, at the same time, not to be equal to the first.'² The three great primary duties, to God, to each other, and to ourselves, may be deduced in the same way as the propositions of Euclid. 'There is no congruity or proportion in the uniform disposition and correspondent order of any bodies or magnitudes, no fitness and agreement in the application of similar and equal geometrical figures one to another,'³ so plain as the fitness of God's receiving honour from his creatures. To deny that I should do for another man what he in the like case should do for me, and to deny it,⁴ 'either in word or action' (a phrase which suggests the singular crotchet soon afterwards expounded by Wollaston), 'is as if a man should contend that, though two and three

¹ Clarke's Works, ii. 609

² *Ib.* p. 618.

³ *Ib.* p. 618.

⁴ *Ib.* p. 619.

are equal to five, yet five are not equal to two and three.' It is characteristic that Clarke does not perceive that this interpretation of the common precept reduces it to a truism. The essence of the rule would be, according to him, that if the circumstances are the same, the same law will give the same results; and it would be as compatible, for example, with a law of mutual hatred as of mutual love. In fact, he argues that the identity of reason is implied in a more special assertion; and then assumes that the universal postulate is the vital principle of the assertion. Finally, our duty to ourselves is deduced from our duty to God, and, therefore, rests upon the same intuitions.

7. An obvious difficulty underlies all reasoning of this class, even in its most refined shape. The doctrine might, on the general assumptions of Clarke's philosophy, be applicable to the 'Laws of Nature,' but is scarcely to be made applicable to the moral law. Every science is potentially deducible from a small number of primary truths; to which Clarke would have added that those truths were intuitively apprehended, and that their denial involved a contradiction in terms. Thus, for example, a being of sufficient knowledge might construct a complete theory of human nature, of which every proposition would be either self-evident or rigorously deducible from self-evident axioms. Such propositions would take the form of laws in the scientific, not in the moral, sense; the copula would be 'is,' not 'ought;' the general formula would be 'all men do so and so,' not 'thou shalt do so and so.' Clarke would have denied the possibility of such a science, because he disjointed the system which would otherwise have conducted him to Spinozism by the unphilosophical hypothesis of free-will. The language, however, which he uses about the moral law is, in reality, applicable to the scientific law alone. It might be said with plausibility (we need not ask whether it could be said with accuracy) that the proposition 'all men are mortal' is capable of being deductively proved by inference from some self-evident axioms. A denial of it would, therefore, involve a contradiction. But the proposition 'thou shalt not kill' is a command addressed to the will, not a statement of a truth addressed to the intellect; and Clarke's attempt to bring it under the same category involves a confusion fatal

to his whole theory. It is, in fact, a confusion between the art and the science of human conduct.

8. If, to evade this difficulty, we throw the statement into a different form, we obtain, indeed, a body of doctrines to which Clarke's arguments may be applicable; but then we introduce precisely the considerations which he endeavoured to exclude. It may, for example, be a demonstrable proposition that all murderers will be damned, or that they will all be hateful, or that their conduct diminishes the sum of general happiness. Such propositions are the groundwork of ethical science, if not the science itself. But, if Clarke's doctrine were stretched so as to include them, it would be merged in a system of theological, or intuitional, or utilitarian morality. Any such formula includes of necessity some references to the feelings with which we regard actions, or to their consequences to mankind. It forms part of the science of human nature, and it was Clarke's ambition, as it has substantially been the ambition of other metaphysicians, to expound a theory of human conduct which should be entirely independent of any observation of human nature. Morality must not be 'subjective.' That means, it must be independent of the idiosyncrasies of individuals. Clarke translates this into the statement: Morality must be independent of the character of the race. He wished to elevate morality into the sphere of pure mathematics, or, what he held to be equivalent, of absolute truth, where the promptings of passion and the lessons of experience should be entirely excluded. He tried to argue from our *a priori* knowledge of the essence of the divine and human natures, and not from the *a posteriori* experience of their relations. Once more, he was transporting a method, applicable in the theological stage of thought, into a metaphysical region where it collapsed from want of the necessary supports. Theologians who—it matters not how—were capable of defining the character of God, could deduce a set of rules independent of, or even contradictory to, experience. Given a just or vindictive and omnipotent ruler, it was easy to infer what should be the conduct of his creatures. But when for Jehovah or the Christian Trinity was substituted the colourless conception of a supreme nature, the *a priori* method could give no results except certain neutral rules

applicable to every fact, and, therefore, condemnatory (or approbatory) of none. From this fatal circle Clarke vainly endeavours to free himself, when he has once taken the suicidal course of refusing to interrogate nature, in order to discover what is pleasing to the God of nature. He is forced in order to give any plausibility to his arguments, to supplement them by heterogeneous reasonings drawn from other systems of morality. When his wings fail to support him in the heavenly spaces beyond the atmosphere, he has recourse to purely utilitarian arguments drawn from the influence of morality upon human happiness.

9. The nugatory character of his system appears in the curious development given to it by Wollaston. Wollaston's doctrine is the expansion of the hint just quoted from Clarke. The system which results is sufficiently ingenious to supply an excellent thesis for attack and defence in the schools; whilst his contemporaries were so impressed as to receive it with the 'highest applause.'¹ So, at least, Conybeare assures us, who himself speaks of the theory as though it were a discovery in morals, to be placed beside the Newtonian discoveries in astronomy. He who acts upon the hypothesis that things are so and so, says Wollaston, proclaims by his acts that they are so and so, and no act that interferes with a true proposition (as if an act could 'interfere' with a true proposition!) can be right. Hence, I ought not to kill a man because, by so doing, I debar him to be a man. To which it was obvious to reply that the action proclaims the very reverse, and that, in any case, it is a mere verbal juggle to call an action a lie. The doctrine, whether in Clarke's or Wollaston's hands, is, in fact, a kind of offshoot from the common theory of metaphysicians who identify crime with error, and which had lately been presented in more imposing forms by many more famous metaphysicians. Many schools of moralists may admit that all immoral action involves an element of intellectual error. To one who has adequate conceptions of the universe, and to whose intellect the consequences of his actions were immediately present, the wisdom of virtue would be so evident that crime would be impossible. God's omniscience implies moral perfection. Our passions lead us into error by distort

¹ Conybeare's 'Defence' &c. p. 239.

our judgments ; and perfectly sound judgment would disperse the mists excited by the passions. This doctrine, whatever its value, took a peculiar form in the school of Clarke. One would have thought it plain that, whether the intellectual error or the passionate impulse were the essential element in wrongdoing, either of them was produced by nature. We obey the law of nature when we blunder as much as when we judge soundly ; for to break that law is not a crime, but an impossibility. The confusion, however characteristic of metaphysicians generally, between the objective and subjective, generated an indistinct impression that a confusion in our conceptions was, in some sense, a confusion in the order of nature itself. If every error involved a contradiction, it seemed that a wrong belief was the ultimate element in every wrong action, and the mistake was identified with the impossible crime of disobedience to nature. Wollaston capped this confusion by calling the blunder a lie.

10. He inevitably fails to extract any intelligible results from this fanciful form of an illusory theory. He is either confined to a series of those barren statements for which metaphysicians have found high-sounding names, such as the doctrine that ' whatever is, is ; ' or that ' A is not not-A ; ' or has to interpret his doctrine as including any statement reconcilable with those propositions. Thus Wollaston slides into utilitarianism. He proclaims that ' happiness must not be denied to be what it is ; and ' thus ' it is by the practice of truth that we arrive at that happiness which is true, ' ' true ' being characteristically used as identical with ' real. ' Hence he makes room for a utilitarian or even a purely selfish system of morality. For if the obligation to truth is interpreted as including the obligation to pursue happiness, we find that all or any of the ordinary sanctions are admissible under this scheme.

11. The nugatory character of the doctrine is still clearer in the application which was most important in the eyes of its supporters. Clarke's doctrine had its root in the laudable desire to prove that morality was not a mere fashion ; and with him and his followers the phrase ' eternal and immutable ' becomes a kind of catchword. Yet, after all, it was obvious

¹ ' Religion of Nature, ' p. 52.

to remark that a proposition is either true or not true; and that to add 'eternal and immutable' makes no real difference. Those words properly refer to the matter of the proposition, not to its formal truth. Every true proposition is, in a sense, 'eternally and immutably' true. If it is true that in the year 1700 a particular bubble burst, it will always be true to the end of time, and it always was true from the beginning of time to say that the bubble burst or would burst in 1700. The real question is not whether the statement that men should not commit murder in the eighteenth century was eternally and immutably true, granting it to be true at the time; for that would be allowed by Hobbes as freely as by Clarke; but whether the wickedness of murder in the eighteenth century proved the wickedness of murder in all times and places. Yet Clarke interprets his phrases in such a way as to make them equivalent to the truism, and to leave the other proposition untouched. 'The nature and relations, the proportions and disproportions, the fitnesses and unfitnesses of things,' he says, 'are eternal, and in themselves absolutely unalterable; but this is only upon supposition that the things themselves exist, and exist in such a manner as they actually do.'¹ So that the thing which is really 'immutable and eternal' is that mysterious entity—a bare proposition which may be applicable to nothing that exists or ever did exist. Nobody surely need trouble himself much as to the truth or falsehood of an abstract proposition which is entirely independent of any concrete embodiment. The point is stated more explicitly by one of Clarke's disciples Balguy. After asserting that the moral relations are manifestly 'independent and immutable in whatever state or relational creatures may be supposed to be placed,' he adds that we may 'conceive human nature so framed that the relation of princes and subjects, parents and children, masters and servants, &c., should have no place in our duty, or lie dormant as it were, in respect of mankind; nevertheless these relations and all truths connected with them, will be in themselves that is, in the divine understanding, precisely what they are now.'² He goes on to qualify this admission by adding that some duties, such as love to God and justice to men, will be

¹ Clarke, p. 640.² Balguy, 'Second Letter to a Deist,' Tracts, p. 304.

binding on all rational creatures under any circumstances. The admission, however, is obviously wide enough for all purposes. In spite of the eternal and immutable nature of the abstract laws, the concrete law may vary as widely as even Mandeville could have desired.

12. The tenet of free-will adopted by the whole school encouraged the delusion that to make morals a science of observation was equivalent to making it arbitrary. They would have been under a similar delusion if they had argued that the art of healing was dependent upon fashion because its principles have to be deduced from facts and not from *a priori* and quasi-mathematical axioms. Price, the last teacher of the school, dwells at greatest length upon this part of the subject. Shaftesbury and Hutcheson had popularised the theory of a 'moral sense.' Price understood them to mean that our moral judgments were merely the dictates of a blind instinct, in which the intellect had no share. Their theory, as expounded by him, would have been that murder was wrong simply because we disliked it; or the dislike would have been alleged as its own justification. He argues, in opposition to this theory, which would certainly have been disowned by its supposed sponsors, that the intellect has not only a share in laying down moral laws and enforcing our obedience, but that it operates, or ought to operate, without the assistance of the emotions. His language upon those points is rendered obscure by his systematically confusing the questions of the criterion and the motive. It is comparatively plausible to say that the intellect is the sole agent in framing the criterion. His language upon this subject may occasionally remind us of Kant's 'Categorical Imperative;' and he seems to have been confusedly aiming at the same truths or errors from which the great German elaborated a moral theory more ingenious, though (as I should say) involving the same fundamental fallacy. He finds fault with the language of some of his own school who had said that virtue consisted in 'conformity to the relations of truths and things'—on the ground that virtue cannot be defined. It is an ultimate form of thought. 'If we will consider why it is right to conform ourselves to the relations in which persons and objects stand to us, we shall find ourselves obliged to terminate our views in a simple immediate percep-

tion, or in something ultimately approved; and for which no justifying reason can be assigned.'¹

This intuition constitutes the obligation to act rightly. He asserts 'that the perception of right and wrong does excite to action, and is alone a sufficient principle of action.'² 'It seems extremely evident that excitement belongs to the very ideas of moral right and wrong, and is essentially inseparable from the apprehension of them. When we are conscious that an action is fit to be done, or that it ought to be done, it is not conceivable that we can remain uninfluenced or want a motive to action.'³ . . . 'Instincts, therefore, as before observed in other instances, are not necessary to the choice of ends. The intellectual nature is its own law. It has within itself a spring and guide of action which it cannot suppress or reject.'⁴

13. Hence we come to the conclusion that our actions do not, as philosophers have maintained, spring exclusively from a desire of pleasure or a dread of pain, but from the mere perception of a truth. Though Price cannot altogether dissociate our emotions from our actions, he endeavours to represent the passions as properly subsidiary to the intellect, and as superfluities of which we might rid ourselves entirely in a higher state of existence. He admits that 'some degree of pleasure is inseparable from the observation of virtuous actions;'⁵ but he seems to hold that this is a merely subsidiary, and so to speak illusory, phenomenon. It would be as unreasonable to infer that 'the discernment of virtue is nothing distinct from the reception of this pleasure' as to infer that the so-called primary qualities are only modes of sensation. According to his philosophy, that is, virtue depends upon those real relations of things themselves which are apprehended only by the intellect. The pleasure given to the emotions, like the sensations produced by external phenomena on our ears or noses, have no independent reality. We should be better if we could do without them altogether. 'The occasion for them' (our passions and appetites) 'arises entirely from our deficiencies and weaknesses. Reason alone, did we possess it in a higher degree, would answer all the ends of them

¹ Price's 'Review' &c. p. 210.

² *Ib.* p. 308.

³ *Ib.* p. 310.

⁴ *Ib.* p. 311.

⁵ *Ib.* p. 99.

Thus there would be no need of the parental affection were all parents sufficiently acquainted with the reasons for taking upon them the guidance and support of those whom nature has placed under their care, and were they virtuous enough to be always determined by those reasons.¹ How there could be any reasons, when the passions and appetites had been eliminated, or how such reasons could determine anybody's conduct, does not appear. Price's argument on this point resembles the assertion that, because the process of intellectual development might enable us at some future day to draw our supplies of heat from some central reservoir instead of maintaining a fire on every hearth, we should therefore be able, if we were clever enough, to do without heat altogether.

14. Not only are the affections superfluous, but any given action is deprived of its merit in so far as they are present. The intellectual determination is, he says, the '*only* spring of action in a reasonable being, so far as he can be deemed morally good and worthy,' and the '*only* principle from which all actions flow which engage our esteem of the agents.'² It follows that '*instinctive benevolence is no principle of virtue, nor are any actions flowing merely from it virtuous.* As far as this influences, so far something else than reason and goodness influence, and so much I think is to be subtracted from the moral worth of any action or character.'³ He argues, for example, that the tenderness of a mother is less valuable morally, as it flows more from instincts and is less attended with reflection on their reasonableness and fitness; and in the same way as virtue is only virtue when it is the product of an intellectual perception, so vice is only vicious so far as the agent knows his actions to be vicious.⁴ The fallacy here is not peculiar to Price or his school; but it is useless to attempt to unravel any further doctrine which has been more adequately set forth by philosophers of higher pretensions both in ancient and modern times. Englishmen of the eighteenth century were little inclined to regard the ideal man as a mere calculating machine without passions or affections, employed in meditating on the eternal relations of things in a universe purified of all emotion, or likely to accept a theory according to which infallibility and not

¹ Price, p. 124² *Ib.* p. 313.³ *Ib.* p. 318.⁴ *Ib.* p. 326.

impeccability constitutes the ultimate perfection, and the perfect man would be lost, not in the love of God or of his race, but in the profoundest mathematical speculations. Price, oddly enough, represents himself as a disciple of Butler, of whom he speaks with the highest reverence, and does not perceive that Butler is in closer agreement with his adversary Shaftesbury than with himself.

III. SHAFTESBURY AND MANDEVILLE.

15. It soon appeared that the moral Euclid which was the ideal of these philosophers would never get beyond the primary axioms which are equally true and trifling. Their metaphysical system decayed, leaving as its sole relic a magniloquent trick of language about the eternal and immutable nature of things. The phrase was familiar to the schools of Clarke and Tindal, but it gradually became too empty for use even in theological controversy. The serious discussion of ethical problems was continued by two schools, which correspond to the speculative tendencies embodied in Reid's Common Sense and Hume's scepticism. Both of them recognised tacitly or explicitly the impossibility of constructing a moral code from the ontological bases.

16. The common-sense school was alarmed by the apparent consequences of this admission. The same logic justified the belief in God and the belief in virtue. If that logic were admitted to be insecure, might not God and virtue disappear from the universe? The common-sense philosophers held, as we have seen, that the vital principles might be preserved, though their truth could not be exhibited as a necessary conclusion of the pure reason. A principle which cannot be demonstrated, and which is yet held to possess independent authority, must be recognised by a kind of intellectual instinct. In ethical discussions, the faculty in which this mysterious power resided was generally described as the moral sense or the conscience. To the ontologist such a theory appeared to be mere empiricism, for it abandoned the claim of tracing back moral dogmas to an ultimate truth. The empiricist, on the other hand, was offended by the recognition of certain dogmas as possessing an authority requiring no confirmation from experience. The radical weakness, indeed,

of a philosophy which tries to save the superstructure whilst abandoning the foundation, which multiplies first principles at will because it cannot prove them, was sufficiently exhibited by the barrenness of Reid's philosophy. In ethical questions the same weakness appears in another form. The intellectual cowardice which refuses to ask fundamental questions is naturally connected with the moral cowardice which refuses to look facts in the face. In the moralists whom we are about to consider there is generally a provoking tendency to an easy optimism. They inherit the pantheistic sentiment that 'whatever is, is right,' though they do not adopt the pantheistic logic; and as nature is still their God, they overlook the dark side of nature. The instinct which believes in God and virtue is very apt to disbelieve in the existence of natural evil and moral wickedness. There was, as we shall see, one great exception in Butler, who owes much of his power to his peculiar position in this respect. His conscience gives an account of the world very unlike that of his complacent brother philosophers. The want of thoroughness common to most of the school, the desire to obtain a comfortable and symmetrical theory at the expense of facts, did not prevent them from discharging a most important function. When the world is without a genuine philosophy, it becomes extremely desirable to assert the existence and value of those impulses which (whatever their nature) we call conscience. The sceptical school was sapping the very foundations of the system with which, rightly or wrongly, the whole moral doctrine had been connected. In such a case, a blind and inexplicable instinct was at least better than none. The common-sense school might be wrong in asserting that the conscience was essentially a primitive and inexplicable faculty. They might, nevertheless, be right in saying that it existed, and that neither they nor their opponents could disprove its reality nor explain its origin. In the sphere of practice they maintained an ideal of virtuous action which was seriously threatened; in the sphere of speculation they at least kept before the world an important problem—what, namely, is the origin of the virtuous impulses?

17. Round this point raged the most active controversies of the period which we have to consider. Is conscience a

reality or a sham ' an ultimate or a derivative faculty ' The sceptics and the intuitionists discussed the question from various points of view. The typical representatives of the two schools of thought in the early part of the century were Shaftesbury and Mandeville, both of them writers of remarkable ability and of great influence upon their contemporaries and successors. I will begin by considering their attitude and relation.

18. The school of Shaftesbury retained the general doctrine of a divine guidance, but generally denied or relegated to the background the doctrine of supernatural sanctions. Anxious to retain a theological conception of the universe, they made a God out of Nature—a God immanent in the world, not acting upon it from without. Good impulses were at once divine and natural. The old God dwelt in a supersensual heaven, and our corrupt world could only reflect scattered lights from its benign Creator. Nature was revealed in the visible universe, and, therefore, the universe was everywhere pervaded by profound harmonies fitted to excite our enthusiastic veneration. It was the new temple, sanctified everywhere by the omnipresent Deity. Our aspirations were gratified within the visible order, instead of seeking for gratification elsewhere. Heaven and hell were no longer required to balance the corrupt desires of man, for man's loftiest impulses were natural. It was unnecessary as in orthodox divinity to call a new world into existence to redress the balance of the old.

19. The school, of which I have called Mandeville the representative, generally retained, by an equally natural process, the doctrine of supernatural sanctions, but rejected the doctrine of the divine guidance. They cared comparatively little for a comprehensive theory of the universe, and fixed their eyes upon the facts immediately around them. A strong grasp of realities distinguished them, as a love of wider generalisation distinguished their adversaries. They recognised the important truth involved in the theological doctrine of human corruption. Man was, in fact, an animal moved by base and ferocious passions. As a matter of observation, religion was the best restraint upon his impulses, and the most tangible part of religion was the belief in future rewards and punishments. They had no desire, therefore, to abolish damnation,

unless, with Mandeville, they accepted the doctrine that all virtue was an empty sham. But they refused to see any signs of supernatural agency in the world around them. Inspecting every theory, to use an illustration of Tucker's, with the microscope of science, they thought that human passions, bad as they might generally be, quite accounted for all the phenomena around them. Theology might still be true as regarded the dim distance beyond their ken, but theology was not applicable to ordinary life. Just as in the deist controversy, it was assumed that God might have revealed himself to the ancient Jews, but never appeared to modern Englishmen, so in ethical controversy, it was thought that God was not a present guide, but it might very well be proved that he would reward or punish us elsewhere. Thus, with thinkers of this class, the divine glory retired from the present and the tangible world, to concentrate itself in a distant past and future; whilst, with their opponents, that glory grew dim and indefinite indeed, but still continued to irradiate the present world. These two currents of speculation run side by side throughout the century; the utilitarian gradually becoming the most conspicuous, as being most in harmony with the tendencies of the age and of English thought. I shall trace them separately, after describing Shaftesbury and Mandeville as their typical representatives.

20. The third Lord Shaftesbury is one of the writers whose reputation is scarcely commensurate with the influence which he once exerted. His teaching is to be traced through much of our literature, though often curiously modified by the medium through which it has passed. He speaks to us in Pope's poetry, and in Butler's theology. All the ethical writers are related to him, more or less directly, by sympathy or opposition. During his life, he and his friend Lord Molesworth were the chief protectors of Toland; and Tindal and Bolingbroke took many hints from his pages. The power is perhaps due less to his literary faculty—for, in spite of high merits, he is a wearisome and perplexed writer—than to the peculiar position which he occupied in speculation, and which at once separates him from his contemporaries, and enabled him to be a valuable critic and stimulator of thought.

21. A grandson of Dryden's Achitophel, and brought up

under the influence of Locke, he had imbibed from his cradle the political principles of the great Whig families. He professed, indeed, to adhere to the genuine party creed, with an independence not shown by its official representatives. Above all, he shared the Whig hatred to high-church principles; and contempt for the slavish political doctrines of nonjurors and highflyers was naturally allied in his mind, as in the minds of many other members of his party, with an equally hearty contempt for their theology. The Church, according to his view, was useful in so far as it tied the hands of priests and fanatics, and acted as a gag instead of a trumpet; it would be pernicious if it could be made an engine of priestly power. He contemptuously professes his 'steady orthodoxy, resignation and entire submission to the truly Christian and catholic doctrines of our Holy Church, as by law established'¹—a profession in which the stress is, of course, to be laid upon the last three words. His Utopia implied an era of general indifference, in which the ignorant might be provided with dogmas for their amusement; and wise men smile at them in secret. The Church, in short, was excellent as a national refrigerating machine; but no cultivated person could believe in its doctrines.

22. Shaftesbury, however, by native intellectual power, and by force of cultivation, was raised far above the ordinary politicians of his day. On the rude stock of commonplace Whiggism were grafted accomplishments strange to most of his countrymen. Driven from a public school by the unpopularity of his grandfather, he had acquired the rare power of enjoying classical literature, without being drilled by grammatical pedants. He had travelled abroad, and there learnt to value, even to excess, the advantages of cosmopolitan culture in art and philosophy. In Italy he had become a connoisseur, and could frame high-sounding æsthetic canons of taste. In Holland, he had made the acquaintance of Bayle and Le Clerc, the leaders of European criticism. He is never tired of preaching the advantages obtainable by the refining process of which he was thus a brilliant example. He complains of the narrow prejudices of his countrymen. Those only will relish his writings 'who delight in the open and free commerce of

¹ Misc. v. ch. iii.

the world, and are rejoiced to gather views and receive light from every quarter.' ¹ A highly cultivated taste is the sole guide both in art and philosophy. 'To philosophise in a just signification is but to carry good breeding a step higher.' ² 'The test of beauty and the relish of what is decent, just, and amiable, perfects the character of the gentleman and the philosopher.' ³ The person who is thus thoroughly trained is called, in his old-fashioned dialect, the 'virtuoso;' and if Shaftesbury has a full measure of the pedantry and conceit belonging to the character, he has still more of the intellectual sensibility which the virtuoso arrogates as his peculiar merit.

23. Shaftesbury's writings appeared between 1708 and 1711. ³ His first two treatises explain his view of contemporary theologians. I have not discussed them in speaking of the deist controversy, although their influence was considerable. Shaftesbury, however, confines himself chiefly to indicating his general attitude of mind, and deals but little in those specific attacks upon the letter of the Bible which formed the staple of contemporary controversy. He looks upon the whole struggle with the supercilious contempt of an indifferent spectator. His 'Letter on Enthusiasm,' provoked by the strange performances of the French prophets, and its sequel, called 'Sensus Communis,' or an 'Essay on the Freedom of Wit and Humour,' explains his theory. His strongest antipathies are excited by that ugly phenomenon which our ancestors condemned under the name of enthusiasm—a word, the change in whose signification is characteristic of many other changes. 'Inspiration,' he says, 'is a real feeling of the Divine presence, and enthusiasm a false one;' ⁴ to which he adds, significantly, that the passions aroused in the two cases are much alike. This false belief in a supernatural influence is at the bottom of the disgusting manifestations of popular superstition, in which men mistake mental diseases for divine inspirations; and equally at the bottom of the superstitions which the Church of Rome has succeeded, with marvellous skill, in fettering and turning to account for the support of its

¹ Misc. iii. ch. i.

² Ib. iii. ch. i.

³ The essay on 'Virtue' had been published in an imperfect state by Toland in 1698. The 'Characteristics,' containing his collected treatises, first appeared in 1711, the year of his death.

⁴ 'Enthusiasm,' sec. 7.

majestic hierarchy. To provide for the enthusiasm of the loftier kind, the rulers of that Church allowed 'their mystics to write and preach in the most rapturous and seraphic strains.'¹ To the vulgar they appealed by temples, statues, paintings, vestments, and all the gorgeous pomp of ritual. No wonder, he exclaims, if Rome, the seat of a monarchy resting on foundations laid so deep in human nature, still appeals to the imagination of all spectators, though some are charmed into a desire for reunion, whilst others conceive a deadly hatred for all priestly rule.

24. Shaftesbury, of course, belongs to the latter category, and for both evils he prescribes the same remedy. Ridicule is the proper antidote to every development of enthusiasm. Instead of breaking the bones of the French charlatans, we had the good sense to make them the subject of 'a puppet-show at Bartle'my fair';² and if a similar prescription had been applied by the Jews seventeen centuries before, he thinks that they would have done far more harm to our religion. For enthusiasm in priestly robes, and armed with the implements of persecution, there is the same remedy as for the enthusiasm serving the passions of a mob by counterfeit miracles. He maintained as a general principle that ridicule was the test of truth; a theory which produced a very pretty quarrel between Warburton and Aken-side. Truth, he argues, 'may bear all lights,'³ and one of the principal lights is cast by ridicule. This is an anticipatory justification of the practice of the deists and their pupil Voltaire. Ridicule is the natural retort to tyranny. 'Tis the persecuting spirit that has raised the bantering one.'⁴ The doctrine, questionable enough in this dogmatic form, may perhaps be admitted with some limitation. Ridicule, out of place, when men are still in earnest enough to fight for their creeds, may be fairly employed in destroying the phantoms of dead creeds. When the prestige has survived the power, when heterodoxy is unfashionable, but not criminal, when priests bluster but cannot burn, satire may fairly come into play. Dogmas whose foundations have been sapped by reason may be toppled over by the lighter bolts of ridicule. The

¹ Misc. ii. ch. ii.³ 'Wit and Humour,' part i. sec. 1.² 'Enthusiasm,' sec. 3.⁴ Ib. sec. 4.

method is hardly possible till some freedom of discussion is allowed, nor becoming when free discussion has brought all disputants to equal terms. Ridicule clears the air from the vapours of preconceived prejudice. Shaftesbury, though insisting even to tediousness upon its importance, is awkward in its application. Nor, indeed, is he to be reckoned amongst the unscrupulous employers of the weapon. It is 'good humour,' not a scoffing humour, which he professes to desire. 'Good humour,' he tells us, 'is not only the best security against enthusiasm, but the best foundation of piety and true religion.'¹ Good humour, in fact, is the disposition natural to the philosopher when enthusiasm has been finally exorcised from religion. All turbulent passions and vehement excitements are alien to his nature. The sour fanatic and the bigoted priest are at opposite poles of disturbance, whilst he dwells in the temperate latitudes of serene contemplation. With the more rational forms of religion he would be the last man to quarrel. He sets himself at one place to prove that 'wit and humour are corroborative of religion and promotive of true faith;' that they have been used by 'the holy founders of religion;' and that ours is 'in the main a witty and good-humoured religion.'² He passes with suspicious lightness over the proof of the last head; and the phrase 'in the main' is obviously intended to exclude a large, but undefined, element of base alloy. So long, however, as religion makes no unpleasant demands upon him he will not quarrel with its general claims. He 'speaks with contempt of the mockery of modern miracles and inspiration;' he is inclined to regard all pretences to such powers as 'mere imposture or delusion;' but on the miracles of past ages he resigns his judgment to his superiors, and on all occasions 'submits most willingly, and with full confidence and trust, to the opinions *by law established*.'³ A miracle which happened seventeen centuries before could hurt nobody; but the miracles of the French prophets, or at the tomb of the Abbé Paris, were noxious enough to require a drastic remedy in the shape of satire. One exception, indeed, must be admitted. Shaftesbury's philosophic calm is slightly disturbed by any mention of the Jews. The idol of the Puritans was naturally the

¹ 'Enthusiasm,' sec. 3.² Misc. ii. ch. iii.³ Ib. ii. ch. ii.

bugbear of the deists. The Jew was the type of all that was fanatical, superstitious, narrow-minded, and offensive, and Shaftesbury hated him with the hatred of Voltaire. When writing as a literary critic, his examples of subjects upon which no poet could confer any interest are taken from Jewish history. Nothing, as the friend of Bayle naturally thinks, could be made of David. 'Such are some human hearts that they can hardly find the least sympathy with that only one which had the character of being after the pattern of the Almighty.'¹ When writing as a moralist the same fertile source supplies him with abundant instances of the fearful consequences of superstition. Deism may be evil when it implies belief in a bad God. If religion gives a divine warrant for cruelty, persecution, barbarity to the conquered, human sacrifices, self-mutilation, treachery, or partiality to a chosen race, the practices which it sanctions are still 'horrid depravity.'² The reference to the Jews is more explicitly pointed in his later writings, where, for example, he explains the allusion to human sacrifice by the story of Abraham and Isaac,³ and discovers the origin of enthusiasm in priest-ridden Egypt, whence it was derived by the servile imitation of the Jews.⁴ Shaftesbury was a theist; but he was certainly not a worshipper of Jehovah.

25. The destructive element of Shaftesbury's writings is, however, strictly subordinate to his main purpose. He differs from Hobbes, the typical representative of the destructive impulses, as profoundly, though he does not hate him so heartily, as the soundest contemporary divines. Suppose, he says, that we had 'lived in Asia at the time when the Magi, by an egregious imposture, had got possession of the empire,'⁵ but had endeavoured to obviate the hatred justly due to their cheats by recommending the best possible moral maxims, what would be our right course? Should we attack both the Magi and their doctrines; repudiate every moral and religious principle, and make men as much as possible wolves to each other? That, he says, was the course pursued by Hobbes, who, both in religion and politics, went on the principle of 'Magophony,'

¹ 'Soliloquy,' part iii. sec. 3.

³ Misc. ii. ch. iii.

² 'Virtue,' book i part ii. sec. 3, and pt. iv. sec. 2.

⁴ Ib. ii. ch. i,

⁵ 'Wit and Humour,' part ii. sec. 1,

or indiscriminate slaughter of his opponents. Shaftesbury, on the contrary, aims at slaying, or rather fettering, the Magi, whilst retaining the precious treasures of which they had become the depositories. He had been profoundly influenced by Hobbes's great opponents, the Cambridge Platonists, and had even written a preface to a volume of sermons published by Whichcote—one of their number. His sceptical tendencies, indeed, prevented him from being a thorough disciple of the school, though their spirit permeates his pages. Metaphysical speculation, again, was not congenial to his temper, and his cosmopolitan training had impressed him with the belief that the day of the great system-mongers was past. The vast tower of Babel, by which the school of Descartes and Leibnitz had hoped to scale the heavens, was crumbling into ruin, leaving for its only legacy a jargon detestable to all intelligent men. Of metaphysics he always speaks with a bitter contempt. It was a pseudo-science, leading to barren formulæ fit only for scholastic pedants. Philosophers are 'a sort of moonblind wits who, though very acute and able in their kind, may be said to renounce daylight and extinguish, in a manner, the bright visible outside world, by allowing us to know nothing besides what we can prove by strict and formal demonstration.'¹ He ridicules the philosophical speculations about 'formation of ideas; their compositions, comparisons, agreement and disagreement.'² Philosophy, in his sense, is nothing but the study of happiness,³ and all these discussions as to substances, entities, and the eternal and immutable relations of things, and pre-established harmonies and occasional causes, and primary and secondary qualities, are so much empty sound. 'The most ingenious way of becoming foolish,' as he very truly says, 'is by a system,'⁴ and, in truth, the systems then existing were rapidly decaying. Should Shaftesbury, then, join the sceptical assault of his tutor, Locke, and endeavour to anticipate Berkeley and Hume? His dislike to purely sceptical speculation, and his want of metaphysical acuteness, precluded such a direction of his studies. The first is illustrated by his unequivocal condemnation of Locke; the second by the fact that, whilst

¹ Misc iv. ch. ii.³ 'Moralists,' iii. sec. 3.² 'Soliloquy,' part iii. sec. 1.⁴ 'Soliloquy,' part iii. sec. 1.

repudiating the metaphysical theories, he really borrows from them the central support of his own doctrine.

26. His theory is given in its most systematic shape in the 'Inquiry concerning Virtue,' but various corollaries and corroborative doctrines are scattered through his discursive disquisitions upon things in general. Shaftesbury is pre-eminently a moralist; for the main purpose of his writings is to show how, amidst the general wreck of metaphysical and theological systems, a sufficient base may still be discovered on which to construct a rational scheme of life. Moreover, his morality is still theological and metaphysical. A belief in God, though hardly in the Christian, any more than in the Jewish God, is an essential part of his system. The belief in justice must, as he urges, precede a belief in a just God.¹ A sound theism follows from morality, not morality from theism. And thus 'religion' (by which he means a belief in God) 'is capable of doing great good or great harm, and Atheism nothing positive in either way.'¹ The worship of a bad deity will produce bad worshippers, as the worship of a good deity produces good worshippers. Atheism, indeed, implies an unhealthy frame of mind, for it means the belief that we are 'living in a distracted universe,' calculated to produce no emotions of love or reverence, and thus it tends to sour the temper and impair the 'very principle of virtue, viz.: natural and kind affection.'² A belief in God means, on the other hand, a perception of harmonious order, and a mind in unison with the system of which it forms a part. Atheism is the discordant, and theism the harmonious, utterance drawn from our nature, according as it is, or is not, in tune with the general order of things. Though at times Shaftesbury uses language which would fit into an orthodox sermon about a 'personal God,'³ his teaching seems to adapt itself more naturally to the pantheism of Spinoza.

27. Intimately connected with this theology is the metaphysical doctrine which lies at the base of his system. With Leibnitz, he is a thoroughgoing optimist. He holds with Pope, who perhaps learnt the doctrine from him, that 'whatever is, is right;' or, in the phrase of Pangloss, 'everything is

¹ 'Virtue,' book i. part iii. sec. 2.

³ See e.g. 'Moralists,' part ii. sec. 3.

² *Ib.* part iii. sec. 3.

for the best in this best of all possible worlds.' The 'Enquiry into Virtue' opens with a demonstration that there can be no real ill in the universe. Apparent evil is merely the effect of our ignorance. The weakness of infants is the cause of parental affection; and all philanthropical impulses are founded on the wants of man. 'What,' he asks, 'can be happier, than such a deficiency as is the occasion of so much good?' If there be a supremely good and all-ruling mind, so runs his argument, there can be nothing intrinsically bad. Or, rather, the absence of evil proves the existence of the all-wise and all-good ruler. Theism is another name for universal optimism. The universe is a veil which but half disguises the presence of an all-pervading essence of absolutely pure benevolence. And, therefore, Shaftesbury exhausts all the resources of eloquence, pedantic and stilted enough, yet at times touched by some genuine emotion, in exalting the wondrous harmonies of nature. Much of his writings is simply an exposition of Dryden's verses:—

From harmony, from heavenly harmony,

This universal frame began.

From harmony to harmony

Through all the compass of the notes it ran,

The diapason closing full in man.

Harmony is Shaftesbury's catchword. On that text he is never tired of dilating. What discords may exist in the general current of harmony are to be resolved into a fuller harmony as our intelligence widens. If we complain of anything useless in nature, we are like men on board a ship in a calm complaining of the masts and sails as useless encumbrances.¹ He dwells, however, less upon metaphors of this kind, which suggest Paley's Almighty watchmaker, than upon the universal harmony which speaks of, or which, we might almost say, is God. Theocles, the expounder of his views in the 'Moralists,' bursts into a prose hymn to nature, conceived in this spirit—'O mighty nature!' he exclaims; 'arise, substitute of Providence, empowered creatress! O, Thou empowering Deity, supreme Creator! Thee I evoke, and Thee alone adore! To Thee this solitude, this place, and these rural meditations are sacred; whilst thus inspired with harmony of thought,

¹ 'Moralists,' part ii, sec. 4.

though uninspired by words and in loose numbers, I sing of nature's order in created beings, and celebrate the beauties which resolve in Thee, the source and principle of all beauty and perfection.'¹ There is beauty, as he goes on to show, in this queer compromise between blank verse and prose, which naturally embodies a strange mixture of bombast and elegance, in the laws of matter, in sense and thought, in the whole universe, in earth, air, water, light, in the animal creation, and in natural scenery. Stilted, frigid, and most awkward when he attempts to enliven his style by playful humour and sarcastic insinuation, there is yet a true vigour and originality in Shaftesbury, which entitles him to high respect.

28. Shaftesbury's theology is thus an attempt to reconcile the old and new by banishing the supernatural, whilst retaining the divine, element of religion. God is to be no longer ruler, external to the world, but an immanent and all-pervading force. He wishes to retain so much of the old conceptions as may enable him to regard the universe as a coherent whole and to look upon it with reverence and affection; but he would reject under the name of enthusiasm all the degrading beliefs which imply the occasional interference, under whatever forms, of a supernatural agent. The evil which he wishes to extirpate is the obstinate anthropomorphism of divines. The advantage which he desires to retain is the power of regarding nature with the sentiments expressed in the higher form of theology, and not to allow it to fall to pieces in a blind chaos of mutilated fragments. The light is to be diffused throughout the universe, not concentrated into a single external focus.

29. Hence arises his fundamental quarrel with the divines. He charges them with blaspheming God, the universe, and man. They blaspheme God when they represent him as angry with his creatures, as punishing the innocent for the guilt, and pacified by the sufferings of the virtuous. They blaspheme the universe, because in their zeal to 'miraculise every thing,' they rest the proof of theology on the interruptions of order rather than upon order itself.² They paint the world in the darkest colours in order to throw the future world in brighter relief, and thus, as Bolingbroke afterwards put it, the devils are in tacit alliance with the atheists. Make the univer-

¹ 'Moralists,' part iii. sec. 1.

² *Ib.* part ii. sec. 5,

a scene of wrong and suffering, and is not the inference that there is no God more legitimate than the inference that a God exists, to provide compensation elsewhere? We cannot, indeed, understand the whole. The spider is meant for the fly, and the fly for the spider; the web and the wing are related to each other; to understand the leaf we must go to the root.¹ Every naturalist must understand the organisation in order to explain the organs.² 'All are but parts of one stupendous whole,' as Pope puts it, whose 'Essay on Man' frequently coincides with Shaftesbury. His incessant reference to the 'mighty union,' to a 'uniform consistent fabric,' and to 'a universal mind,'² by which the whole is animated, is the keynote of Shaftesbury's writings. The theory is in part identical with Butler's, but with this vital difference—that whereas, with Butler, nature testifies to an external Creator, nature is with Shaftesbury itself divine. The supernatural element is thus excluded; for if nature be God or the veil of God, how should God interfere with his work?

30. But Shaftesbury's conception of man is that which places him in most radical opposition to the divines, for they had blasphemed man even more than they blasphemed God and the universe. Man, as the chief work of nature, must show the plainest marks of the divine power. The theological dogma of corruption, and Hobbes's doctrine of the state of nature as a perpetual warfare, are equally alien to him. The state of nature—to quote Pope once more—

The state of Nature was the reign of God;

as how should it be otherwise if God be nature? And therefore, Shaftesbury repudiates with special indignation the doctrine of supernatural rewards and punishments. They have no proper place in a system which restores the divinity of man and represents the universe as self-balanced without the aid of external considerations. He believes, indeed, in an immaterial soul, and he does not deny that a belief in hell has its advantages for the vulgar. But his whole energy is bent to show that hopes and fears of a future state are so far from being the proper reward of virtue that they are rather destructive of its essence. The man who obeys the law under threats is no

¹ 'Virtue,' book i. part ii. sec. 1.

² 'Moralists,' part ii. sec. 4.

better than the man who breaks it when at liberty. 'There is no more of rectitude, piety, or sanctity in a creature thus reformed than there is of weakness or gentleness in a tiger strongly chained, or innocence and sobriety in a monkey under the discipline of the whip.'¹ The greater the obedience, the greater the servility. The habit of acting from such motives strengthens self-love and discourages the disinterested love of God for his own sake. In short, 'the excellence of the object, not the reward or punishment, should be our motive,' though where the higher motive is inadequate the lower may be judiciously brought in aid.² 'A devil and a hell,' as he elsewhere puts it, 'may prevail where a gaol and a gallows are thought insufficient;' but such motives, he is careful to add, are suited to the vulgar, not to the 'liberal, polished, and refined part of mankind,' who are apt to show that they hold such 'pious narrations to be no better than children's tales for the amusement of the more vulgar.'³ Hell, in short, is a mere outpost on the frontiers of virtue, erected by judicious persons to restrain the vulgar and keep us from actual desertion; but not to provide an animating and essential part of the internal discipline

31 Meanwhile, the removal of this external barrier naturally associates itself with a vigorous assertion of the efficacy of the internal guidance. The doctrine, however, is radically transformed. To believe in a supernatural interference with our conduct would be to fall into the errors of enthusiasm. Human nature is itself divine, and the external guide becomes a natural organ. The term 'moral sense,' which Shaftesbury invented to express his doctrine, became a technical phrase with his successors. With him, it indicates that natural tendency to virtue which was implicitly denied in the dogma of human corruption. The moral sense, as a divine or natural instinct (for the two phrases are equivalent), directs us by its own authority, and thus in practice supersedes the necessity of an appeal to our selfish instincts. Should anyone ask me, he says, why I would avoid being nasty when nobody was present, I should think him a very nasty gentleman to ask the question. If he insisted, I should reply, Because I have a

¹ 'Virtue,' book i. part iii. sec. 3.

² Misc. iii. ch. ii.

³ 'Moralists,' part ii. sec. 3.

nose. If he asked further, What if you could not smell, I should reply that I would not see myself nasty. But if it was in the dark? 'Why even then, though I had neither nose nor eyes, my *sense* of the matter would still be the same; my nature would rise at the thoughts of being sordid; or, if it did not, I should have a wretched nature indeed, and hate myself for a beast.'¹ Our hatred to vice, then, is a primitive instinct; and Shaftesbury is rather inclined to cut summarily the knot, which arises from the possible conflict between interest and virtue. He declares roundly that it does not exist. 'To be wicked and vicious,' as he argues elaborately and with much vigour, 'is to be miserable and unhappy;' and 'every vicious action must be self-injurious and ill.'² Why, then, one is disposed to ask, is it so hard to be virtuous? But to be a consistent optimist, one must learn the art of shutting one's eyes

32. The moral sense thus supplies—to the 'virtuoso' at least—the necessary sanctions and motives; and it is in this vindication of human nature from the charges made against it by cynics and by theologians that Shaftesbury's merits are most conspicuous. The further question remains, what is the criterion of morality thus established? What are the actions which the moral sense approves? To such questions, Shaftesbury replies—so far as he makes any explicit reply—by dwelling upon his favourite doctrine of the universal harmony. The moral sense is merely a particular application of the faculty by which we apprehend that harmony. The harmony, as revealed to our imagination, produces the sense of the beautiful; as partially understood by reason, it generates philosophy; as shown in the workings of human nature, it gives rise to the moral sense. The æsthetic and the moral perceptions are in fact the same, the only difference lying in the objects to which they are applied. 'Beauty and good with you, Theocles,' he says, 'I perceive, are still one and the same.'³ Or, as he elsewhere puts it, 'what is beautiful is harmonious and proportionable; what is harmonious and proportionable is true; and what is at once both beautiful and true is of consequence agreeable and good.'⁴ And thus

¹ 'Wit and Humour,' part iii. sec. 4.

² 'Virtue,' conclusion.

³ 'Moralists,' part iii. sec. 2.

⁴ Misc. iii. ch. ii.

Shaftesbury's last word is cultivate your taste. The virtuous is the best judge of manners as of art. Criticism is of surpassing importance with him, because criticism gives the theory of judging in religion, in art, or in morality. Human passions are divided into the natural affections, which lead to the public good; the 'self-affections' (the 'self-regarding affections,' as later utilitarians would say), 'which lead on to the good of the private,' and those which, as simply injurious, may be called the 'unnatural affections.'¹ To eliminate the last, and to establish a just harmony between the others, is the problem of the moralist; and he will judge the harmonious development of a man as a critic would judge of the harmony of a pictorial or a musical composition. Man, again, can be fully understood only as part of the human race. He is a member of a vast choir, and must beat out his part in the general music. Hence, Shaftesbury dwells chiefly on the development of the social affections, though admitting that they may be developed in excess. The love of human beings must be the ruling passion. To the objection that one may love the individual but not the species, which is 'too metaphysical an object,'² he replies by maintaining that to be 'friend to anyone in particular, it is necessary to be first friend to mankind.'³ He has been in love, he says, with the people of Rome in many ways, but specially under the symbol 'of a beautiful youth called the genius of the people.' But the full answer to the difficulty is given in the Hymn to Nature, of which I have already quoted a fragment.

33. But what, after all, it might be asked, was this 'harmony' of which Shaftesbury speaks so fluently? Does his moral system crumble in one's hands when one endeavours to grasp it firmly? Admit that a 'virtuoso' is the ideal man, and who is to decide between the virtuosoes? Is the standard of morality to be as fluctuating and uncertain as the standard of æsthetic taste? One 'virtuoso' swears by God and one by Greek architecture—which is right? The answer might conceivably be, it does not much matter. Let each man go his own way. But that answer is scarcely open to the moralist whose object is to discover some inflexible mo-

¹ 'Virtue,' book ii. part i. sec. 3.

² *Ib.* part ii. sec. 2.

³ 'Moralists,' part ii. sec. 1.

standard, and who is put off with this elastic virtuoso jargon. Lord Shaftesbury is doubtless a polished gentleman, but when he gives us his canons of criticism in place of a moral rule, we feel that he is a rather poor substitute for St. Paul or Marcus Aurelius. Shaftesbury anticipated and endeavoured to answer this objection. He declared that political maxims, drawn from considering the balance of power, were as 'evident as those in mathematics;' ¹ and inferred that moral maxims, founded on a theory as to the proper balance of the passions, would be equally capable of rigid demonstration. The harmony of which he spoke had an objective reality. The moral sense required cultivation to catch the divine concords which run through creation; but the judgment of all cultivated observers would ultimately be the same. If a writer on music were to say that the rule of harmony was caprice, he would be talking nonsense. 'For harmony is harmony by nature, let men judge ever so ridiculously of music.' Symmetry and proportion are equally founded in nature, 'let men's fancy prove ever so barbarous, or their fashions ever so Gothic in their architecture, sculpture, or whatever other designing art. 'Tis the same case where life and manners are concerned. Virtue has the same fixed standard. The same numbers, harmony, and proportion will have place in morals, and are discoverable in the characters and affections of mankind, in which are laid the just foundations of an art and science, superior to every other of human practice and comprehension.'² Shaftesbury thus vindicates his claim to be a 'realist' in his theism and his morality. Virtue is a reality, and can be discovered by all who will go through the same process of self-culture. And yet one would like to have a rule rather more easy of application than this vague analogy of music. With thy harmony, one might say, thou beginnest to be a bore to us.

34. This pedantic fine gentleman, whose delicacy placidly ignores the very existence of vice and misery, who finds in the cultivated taste of a virtuoso sufficient guidance and consolation through all the weary perplexities of the world, had very real power in him in spite of his pedantry; but he was ill qualified to impress shrewd men of the world, or the philosophical school, which refuses to sink hard facts

¹ 'Wit and Humour,' part iii. sec. 1.

² 'Soliloquy,' part iii. sec. 8.

in obedience to fine-spun theories. In Germany, where sentimentalism is more congenial to the national temperament, he found a warmer reception than amongst his own countrymen.¹ In England, the contempt for flimsy speculation, which often leads to the rejection of much that is valuable because it is not palpable and definite, brought Shaftesbury into unmerited neglect. The first critic who laid a coarse hand on his pretentious philosophy was Mandeville.

35. Bernard de Mandeville published the 'Fable of the Bees' in 1714.² It consists of a doggrel poem, setting forth how a hive of bees were thriving and vicious, and how, on their sudden reformation, their prosperity departed with their vice. A comment follows, expounding his theory in detail. In later editions there were added an 'Essay on Charity and Charity Schools,' a 'Search into the Nature of Society,' and a series of dialogues upon the Fable. The 'Fable of the Bees' was presented as a nuisance by the Grand Jury of Middlesex in 1723. Mandeville became a byword with all the respectable authors of the day; and his book was attacked as a kind of pot-house edition of the arch-enemy Hobbes. Berkeley, Law, Hutcheson, Warburton, and Brown may be named amongst his most eminent opponents. To say the truth, the indignation thus excited was not unnatural. Mandeville is said to have been in the habit of frequenting coffee-houses, and amusing his patrons by ribald conversation. The tone of his writings harmonises with this account of his personal habits. He is a cynical and prurient writer, who seems to shrink from no jest, however scurrilous, and from no paradox, however grotesque, which is calculated to serve the purpose, which he avows in his preface to be his sole purpose, of diverting his readers—readers, it may be added, not very scrupulous in their tastes. Yet a vein of shrewd sense runs through his book, and redeems it from anything like contempt. Nay, there are occasional remarks which show great philosophical acuteness. A hearty contempt for the various humbugs of this world is not in itself a bad thing. When a man includes

¹ See some remarks on this in Spicker's 'Shaftesbury.'

² The poem itself was first published in 1705. It did not excite much attention until republished with comments in 1723.

amongst the humbugs everything that passes with others for virtue and purity, it is repulsive; though even in such a case we may half forgive a writer like Swift, whose bitterness shows that he has not parted with his illusions without a cruel pang. Mandeville shares Swift's contempt for the human race; but his contempt, instead of urging him to the borders of madness, merely finds vent in a horse-laugh. He despises himself as well as his neighbours, and is content to be despicable. He is a scoffer, not a misanthrope. You are all Yahoos, he seems to say, and I am a Yahoo; and so—let us eat, drink, and be merry.

36. His view of this world is, therefore, the obverse of Shaftesbury's, of whom he speaks with bitter ridicule. 'Two systems,' he says, 'cannot be more opposite than his lordship's and mine.'¹ 'The hunting after this *pulchrum et honestum*'—Shaftesbury's favourite expression—'is not much better than a wild-goose chase;'² and, if we come to facts, 'there is not a quarter of the wisdom, solid knowledge, or intrinsic worth in the world that men talk of and compliment one another with; and of virtue and religion there is not an hundredth part in reality of what there is in appearance.'³ This is his constant tone. Mandeville speaks in the favourite character of the man of the world, whose experience has shown him that statesmen are fools, and churchmen hypocrites, and that all the beautiful varnish of flimsy philosophy with which we deceive each other is unable to hide from him the vileness of the materials over which it forms a superficial film. He will not be beguiled from looking at the seamy side of things. Man is corrupt from his head to his foot, as theologians truly tell us; but the heaven which they throw in as a consolation is a mere delusion—a cheat invented to reconcile us to ourselves. Tell your fine stories to devotees or schoolgirls, he seems to say, but don't try to pass them off upon me, who have seen men and cities, and not taken my notions from books.

37. The particular paradox which gave the book its chief notoriety is summed up in the alternative title, 'Private Vices, Public Benefits.' The fallacy which lies at the bottom of his

¹ Mandeville's 'Fable of the Bees,' p. 205.

² Ib. p. 508.

³ Ib. p. 210.

argument is sufficiently transparent, though it puzzled many able men at the time, and frequently reappears at the present day in slightly altered forms. The doctrine that consumption instead of saving is beneficial to labourers has a permanent popularity. Mandeville puts it in the most extravagant shape. 'It is,' he declares, 'the sensual courtier that sets no limit to his luxury; the fickle strumpet that invents new fashions every week; the haughty duchess, that in equipage, entertainment, and all her behaviour, would imitate a princess; the profuse rake and lavish heir, that scatter about their money without wit or judgment, buy everything they see, and either destroy or give it away the next day; the covetous and perjured villain that squeezed an immense treasure from the tears of widows and orphans, and left the prodigals the money to spend' . . . it is of these that we are in need to set all varieties of labour to work, and 'to procure an honest livelihood to the vast numbers of working poor that are required to make a large society.'¹ He pronounces the Reformation to have been scarcely more efficacious in promoting prosperity 'than the silly and capricious invention of hoop'd petticoats.'¹ 'Religion,' he adds, 'is one thing and trade is another. He that gives most trouble to thousands of his neighbours, and invents the most operose manufactures, is, right or wrong, the greatest friend to society.'¹ Going still further, he thinks that even the destruction of capital may be useful. 'The fire of London was a great calamity, but if the carpenters, bricklayers, smiths,' and others set at work 'were to vote against those who lost by the fire, the rejoicings would equal, if not exceed, the complaints.'² Foolish paradoxes, it may be said, and useful at most as an extravagant statement of a foolish theory, may help to bring about its collapse. And yet the writer who propounded such glaring absurdities was capable of attacking a commercial fallacy with great keenness, and of anticipating the views of later authorities.³

38. Mandeville, in fact, has overlaid a very sound and sober thesis with a number of showy paradoxes which, perhaps,

¹ Mandeville, pp. 227, 228.

² *Ib.* p. 230

³ See *e.g.* his remarks, at p. 58, upon the balance of trade; and at p. 465, on the division of labour.

he only half believed. When formally defending himself, he can represent his audacities as purely ironical. He confesses that he has used the words : ' What we call evil in this world, moral as well as natural, is the grand principle that makes us social creatures, the solid basis, the light and support of all trades without exception.'¹ The phrase, he admits, has an awkward sound ; but had he been writing for people who could not read between the lines, he would have explained in good set terms that he only meant to argue that ' every want was an evil ; that on the multiplicity of those wants depended all those mutual services which the individual members of a society pay to each other ; and that, consequently, the greater variety there was of want, the greater the number of individuals who might find their private interest in labouring for the good of others ; and, united together, compose one body.'² The streets of London, to use his own illustration,³ will grow dirtier as long as trade increases ; and, to make his pages more attractive, he had expressed this doctrine as though he took the dirt to be the cause, instead of the necessary consequence. The fallacy, indeed, is imbedded too deeply in his argument to be discarded in this summary fashion. The doctrine that the heir who scatters, and not the man who accumulates, wealth, really sets labour at work, was so much in harmony with the ideas of the age, that even Berkeley's acuteness only suggests the answer that an honest man generally consumes as much as a knave. There is, however, a core of truth in the sophistry. Large expenditure is a bad commercial symptom, so far as it indicates that consumption is outrunning accumulation ; it is good so far as it indicates that large accumulations render large consumption possible. Mandeville, confusing the two cases, attacks the frugal Dutchman, who saves to supply his future wants, and the frugal savage, who, consuming little, yet consumes all that he produces, and produces little because he has no tastes and feels no want. As against the savage his remarks are perfectly just. The growth of new desires is undoubtedly an essential condition towards the improvement of society, and every new desire brings new evils in its train.

39. The importance of the doctrine appears in its moral

¹ Mandeville, p. 246.

² *Ib.* p. 251.

³ Preface, p. viii.

aspect; and it was here that Mandeville gave most scandal, whilst here, too, he indulged in the most daring paradoxes. He is, in fact, radically opposed to the ascetic doctrine of the theologians. Accept in all sincerity the doctrine of contempt for the world and its wealth, and the further doctrine that all natural passions are bad, and we should be a set of naked savages. He anticipates the teaching of later economists, that accumulation of wealth affords the essential material base of all the virtues of civilisation. And it is perfectly true that the industrial view of morality is, on this point, vitally opposed to the old theological view. Mandeville gives an appearance of paradox to his doctrine by admitting, with the divine, that the pursuit of wealth is intrinsically vicious, and by arguing, with the economist, that it is essential to civilisation. Luxury, he says emphatically, should include everything that is not necessary to the existence of a naked savage.¹ Virtue consists in renouncing luxury. Hence the highest conceivable type of virtue is to be found in religious houses, where the inmates bind themselves by rigid vows of poverty and chastity to trample the flesh under foot; or, rather it would be found there, if all monks and nuns did not cover the vilest sensuality under a mask of hypocrisy.² The ideal of a Trappist monk is plainly incompatible with the development of an industrious community. Pushing the theory to an extreme, which is, however, sanctioned by some less paradoxical authorities, he denies the name of virtuous to any doctrine which is prompted by natural instinct. The 'vilest women,' he tells us, have exerted themselves in behalf of their children 'as violently as the best.'³ And this, which might seem to prove that there is virtue even in the vilest, is converted to a proof that there is no virtue even in the most excellent. For, says Mandeville, we are prompted to such actions 'by a natural drift or inclination, without any consideration of the injury or benefit the society receives from it,' and 'there is no merit in pleasing ourselves.'³ A murderer or a highwayman would be thrilled with horror if, without being able to interfere, he should see a pretty child torn in pieces by 'a nasty overgrown sow,'⁴ and, therefore,

¹ Mandeville, p. 56.³ *Ib.* p. 35.² *Ib.* p. 87.⁴ *Ib.* p. 156.

there is no virtue in compassion. In the same spirit, he argues with offensive coarseness, that modesty is no virtue, because it does not imply an extinction, but only a concealment, of the natural passions.

40. The military as well as the industrial virtues are condemned by theologians, and are yet necessary to society. Duelling, for example, is forbidden by divines, and yet is an essential part of the code of honour, without which there would be no living in a large nation.¹ The contrast between honour and religion is vigorously summed up, and the conclusion is simple. 'Religion is built on humility, honour on pride. How to reconcile them must be left to wiser heads than mine.'² After describing a perfect gentleman, who might have stood for the portrait of Sir Charles Grandison, he argues that all his virtues might proceed from nothing but a thirst for praise;³ and proves it by asserting that such a man would fight a duel in spite of his religious principles, and thus obey man rather than God.⁴ In fact, Richardson found this dilemma a very awkward one. This and much more might pass for an attack on the ascetic virtues, to which the writer has wilfully given the form of an attack upon virtue itself. It is, however, mixed up with a more unequivocal depreciation of human nature. Mandeville puts in its most offensive form the dogma that what we call virtue is but selfishness masquerading. His theory is summed up in the assertion that 'the moral virtues are the political offspring which flattery begot upon pride.'⁵ Lawgivers, moralists, and philosophers, it appears, entered into a strange conspiracy for their own vile purposes to persuade men into submission. For this purpose they 'thoroughly examined all the strength and frailties of our nature,'⁶ and discovered that flattery was the most powerful instrument for moving human beings. 'Having by this artful way of flattery insinuated themselves into the hearts of men, they began to instruct them in the notions of honour and shame,'⁶ and by various cunning devices of the same kind gradually persuaded the multitude to submit quietly to the yoke imposed upon them by the ambitious. This preposterous theory is precisely analogous

¹ Mandeville, p. 131.

² *Ib.* p. 317, &c.

³ *Ib.* p. 18.

⁴ *Ib.*

⁵ *Ib.* p. 319.

⁶ *Ib.* p. 14.

to the ordinary deist doctrine that the sacred writings were mere forgeries. Virtue, like religion, was assumed to be a mere figment when it was no longer believed to come straight from heaven. Human cunning is the substitute for final causes.

41. Mandeville is, in this respect at least, as much opposed to Shaftesbury as to the theologians. He agrees with the orthodox in regarding Shaftesbury's scheme as too flimsy to influence human beings; though he differs from them in denying that any more powerful scheme can be set up in its place. With Shaftesbury virtue corresponds to a certain harmony pervading all the works of nature, and recognisable by the human intellect. With Mandeville it is a mere fashion, changing as rapidly as taste in dress or in architecture.¹ Mandeville, like Shaftesbury, can talk of nature when it suits his purpose; but the difference of their conceptions is characteristic. With Shaftesbury nature is an impersonal deity, of whose character and purpose we can form a conception, inadequate and yet sufficient for our world, by tracing out the design manifested in the marvellous order of the visible universe. With Mandeville nature is a power altogether inscrutable to our feeble intelligence. In a certain sense, indeed, we can see that she has formed animals for inhabiting this world; but, in fact, 'every part of her works, ourselves not excepted, are an impenetrable secret to us, that eludes all enquirers.'² Nature makes animals to feed upon each other; waste of life, cruelty, voracity, and lust are parts of her mysterious plan; 'all actions in nature, abstractedly considered, are equally indifferent;'³ and cruelty and malice are words applicable only to our own feelings. Nature, in short, is a dark power, whose action can only be inferred from facts, not from any *a priori* theory of design, harmony, and order.⁴ We know, because we see, that the passions of men, pride, lust, and cruelty, have been and still are the great moving forces which have shaped society as we see it, and brought out the complex structure of a civilised nation; and, what is more, they are still the great moving powers, though we hide them under decorous disguises. Revolting as is the picture of

¹ Mandeville, p. 209 *et seq.*

² *Ib.* p. 422.

³ *Ib.* p. 441.

⁴ In the 'Free Thoughts on Religion' (1720) Mandeville expressly says that the Manichaean theory is the most consonant to reason (p. 105).

human nature which results, Mandeville is very superior to Shaftesbury from a purely scientific point of view. He owes his superiority to a resolution to look facts in the face, instead of being put off by flimsy rhetoric. Whilst Shaftesbury contemptuously rejects the theory of the savage origin of man as inconsistent with the conception of a designing providence,¹ Mandeville anticipates, in many respects, the views of modern philosophers. He gives a kind of conjectural history describing the struggle for existence by which man gradually elevated himself above the wild beasts, and formed societies for mutual protection. He shows how the development of the military passions would gradually strengthen the rising order.² He discovers the origin of religion in the natural fetichism which induces young children to fancy that everything thinks and feels as they do themselves.³ He describes the slow growth of language;⁴ and he makes the general remark, which is really instructive and significant, that many things which are ordinarily attributed to one man's genius are really the result of long time and many generations slowly and unconsciously co-operating to build up arts without any great variety in natural sagacity.⁵

42. These and other observations, much in advance of the general speculation of the time, exhibit Mandeville's acuteness. His brutality and his love of paradox revolt us as a display of cynical levity. He ruthlessly destroys the fine coating of varnish which Shaftesbury has bestowed upon human nature, and shows us with a grin the hideous elements that are fermenting beneath. The grin is simply detestable; but we cannot quite deny the facts. Mandeville was giving up to the coffee-houses a penetration meant for loftier purposes. The man of science has this much in common with the cynic, that he must not shrink from tracing the origin of the most beautiful forms in repulsive substances. The fairest flowers, as Tucker says, may be rooted in dunghills, and the genuine observer must examine the dunghill as well as the flower. No object must be excluded from his laboratory because it is of ill savour and repulsive aspect. To say that all virtue can be analysed into brutal passion is, doubtless, a gross libel upon

¹ 'Moralists,' part ii. sec. 4.

³ *Ib.* p. 409.

² Mandeville, p. 442, &c.

⁴ *Ib.* p. 466.

⁵ *Ib.* p. 361.

human nature ; and yet too many of our virtues are, in fact, barbarous passions decorously disguised, and we must not shrink from acknowledging that fact more than any other fact. There is, indeed, a common fallacy which Mandeville perversely encourages to give a higher flavour to his pages. People of the present day refuse to believe in our descent from apes, because they illogically infer that the admission would prove that we are apes still. Mandeville assumes that because our virtues took their rise in selfish or brutal forms, that they are still brutality and selfishness in masquerade. The assumption is erroneous ; but, from a scientific point of view, it has the merit of calling attention to the necessity of investigating primitive conditions of society, in order to account for our existing sentiments. And hence we may appreciate the unintentional co-operation of Shaftesbury and Mandeville. Shaftesbury as setting forth the ' dignified,' and Mandeville as exclusively dwelling upon the baser, aspect of our nature, are equally unsatisfactory. Neither optimism nor pessimism is a tenable form of belief ; but the two opinions are rather complementary than antagonistic. When Shaftesbury finds an instinct which he cannot explain, he declares it to be inexplicable. When Mandeville finds it, he declares that it does not really exist. Shaftesbury and his followers kept before their countrymen the belief in a higher doctrine of morality than the popular theory of gross selfishness. Mandeville, by attempting to resolve all virtue into selfishness, stimulated the efforts towards a scientific explanation of the phenomena. With Shaftesbury we may admit the existence of a moral sense ; with Mandeville we may admit that it is not an ultimate and irresoluble instinct. The theory that virtue is divine recognises the transcendent importance and the independent force of the virtuous instincts. The theory that virtue is an invention is a crude form of the doctrine that, valuable as those instincts are, they are derivative, and that their origin may be the legitimate subject of scientific enquiry. The action and reaction of the opposing schools continued throughout the century, for each school ignored the element of truth contained in its opponent.

43. Although the names of Shaftesbury and Mandeville appear in most contemporary writings, neither of them became

the centre of any formal controversy, apart from the main current of discussion. They were, however, attacked by three writers of marked ability. In 1724 appeared Law's 'Remarks on the Fable of the Bees.'¹ In 1732 Berkeley published the 'Minute Philosopher,' the second dialogue of which refers to Mandeville, and the third to Shaftesbury. Many years later (in 1751) Brown published a formal Essay on the 'Characteristics,' in which Mandeville, too, comes in for a brief notice.

44. Law's pamphlet is, perhaps, the ablest of these attacks. With the controversial ability in which he had scarcely a superior in that time, he assaults some of Mandeville's singular paradoxes. He points out, for example, with admirable clearness, that an action is not the less virtuous because we are prompted to it by natural instincts or by acquired habits. It is virtuous 'because it is in obedience to reason and the laws of God, and does not cease to be so because the body is either formed by use or created by disposition, easy and ready for the performance of it. . . . Nay, all habits of virtue would, upon this foot, be blamable, because such habits must be supposed to have rendered both body and mind more ready and exact in goodness.'² The fallacy thus attacked is rather an outlying part of Mandeville's system, though he makes great use of it by giving a libellous tone to his remarks on human nature. Oddly enough, the cynic Mandeville asserts the reality of benevolent impulses in order to throw doubt upon human virtue. The more serious question remains, whether virtue is to be called real. Mandeville and Law follow the intellectual school in the assumption that, if virtue included an element of taste and observation, it was in some sense 'unreal.' Mandeville argues that the taste for philanthropy, humility, and chastity may vary like the taste for big or little buttons. The true answer would be that a taste for buttons is just as much the product of fixed laws as a taste for philanthropy; though as incomparably less permanent instincts are concerned, the taste is correspondingly variable. Assuming, however, that virtue would become purely arbitrary if admitted to depend on the changing elements of human nature, Law asserts, with great vigour, that 'moral virtue is founded on the immu-

¹ Law's pamphlet was republished in 1844, with a preface by Mr. Maurice.

² Law's Works, ii. 41.

table relations of things, in the perfections and attributes of God, and not in the pride of man or the craft of cunning politicians.'¹ The singular hypothesis indicated in the last phrase is attacked with admirable force. 'Do but suppose *all* first principles to be invented,' he says, 'and then it will follow that nothing could be invented in any science.' If the primary reasons of mathematicians are mere arbitrary assumptions, the science disappears. 'Were we not all mathematicians and logicians, there would be no such sciences; for science is only an improvement of those first principles which nature has given us.'² He ingeniously compares Mandeville's theory of the invention of virtue to an imaginary invention of an erect posture. 'The first legislators,' says his supposed theorist, 'having examined the strength and weakness of man's body, discovered that he was not so top-heavy but that he might stand upright on his feet; but the difficulty was how to raise him up. Some philosophers, more sanguine than the rest, found out that, though man crept on the ground, yet he was made up of pride, and that, if flattery took hold of that, he might easily be set on his legs. Making use of this bewitching engine, they extolled the excellence of his shape above other animals, and told him what a grovelling thing it was to creep on all fours like the meanest animals. Thus did these philosophers shame poor man out of his natural state of creeping, and wheedled him into the dignity and honour of standing upright to serve their own ambitious ends, and that they might have his hands to be employed in their drudgery.'³ The parallel is only too perfect. Law does not perceive that, beside the theory which represents man as wheedled into walking, and that which represents him as walking by an inherent and immutable necessity of his nature, there is the theory that the walking may have been evolved from the creeping animal by the operation of natural laws.

45. Berkeley's 'Minute Philosopher' is the least admirable performance of that admirable writer. The most characteristic part is the attempt to erect a proof of theology upon his own peculiar metaphysical theory. The remainder consists for the most part of the familiar commonplaces, expressed in a style of exquisite grace and lucidity, but not

¹ Law's Works, ii. 29.

² Ib. p. 22.

³ Ib. p. 20.

implying any great originality. The general tendency of his remarks, both upon Mandeville and Shaftesbury, may be described as utilitarian. Although, as already noticed, he seems to be incapable of detecting the economical fallacy involved in Mandeville's eulogy upon extravagance, he, of course, sees, and has no difficulty in proving, that vice is prejudicial to a community. He establishes with rather superfluous care that immorality of all kinds is ruinous to the constitution of individuals, and destructive to a state. Virtue is not a mere fashion, but implies obedience to the laws upon which men's physical and spiritual health depends. Shaftesbury is condemned on the same grounds. Admitting Shaftesbury's leading principle of the beauty of virtue, Berkeley argues that our sense of beauty consists essentially in our perception of the right adaptation of means to ends. The beauty of the universe consists, therefore, in the existence of an intelligent principle, governing all things, punishing the wicked, protecting the virtuous. 'In such a system, vice is madness, cunning is folly, wisdom and virtue all the same thing ;'¹ and whatever seems amiss, will, in the last act, be ultimately wound up according to the strictest rules of wisdom and justice. Shaftesbury's ruling mind must, therefore, be either the Christian Deity, or another name for blind Fate. In the latter case, a man must be a 'Stoic or a Knight-errant'¹ to be virtuous ; the 'minute philosopher' is the devotee of 'an inexplicable enthusiastic notion of moral beauty,'² or, as Lysicles, the representative of Mandeville, puts it, his doctrine 'hath all the solid inconveniences, without the amusing hopes and prospects, of the Christian.'³

46. John Brown, better known as the author of the 'Estimate,' was a writer of genuine ability.⁴ His style is clear, and he is free from the coarse abuse and the cavilling at petty details, which are the prevailing faults of controversialists of the time. His essays, directed against a writer who had been nearly forty years dead, may be regarded as some testimony to the enduring influence of Shaftesbury ; but they are, perhaps, rather an indication that poor Brown, who had a

¹ Dial. iii. sec. 10.

² Ib. sec. 12.

³ Ib. sec. 7.

⁴ Mr. Mill, in his essay on Bentham, refers with very high praise to this performance of Brown.

hard struggle to win fame and some solid rewards, was rather looking out for a good text for the display of his talents than anxious to encounter a vital error. The immediate suggestion came from Warburton, who had been told by Pope that the 'Characteristics' had to his knowledge done more harm to revealed religion in England than all other infidel books. The essays are three in number. In the first, directed against Shaftesbury's theory of ridicule as the test of truth, which had been attacked by Warburton and supported by Akenside, he establishes without much trouble the obvious truism that raillery is not argument. In the last, he puts the ordinary arguments against Shaftesbury's sneers at revelation. The second considers the moral theory of Shaftesbury, and more briefly that of Mandeville. The argument depends on the utilitarian principle, which he had probably learnt from Hume, though he only refers to him as 'a late writer of subtlety and refinement,'¹ in order to controvert his view of the existence of purely benevolent affections. Brown, in substance, anticipates Paley, and insists in the same spirit upon the necessity of some effective sanction to the moral law. 'Where selfish or malevolent affections happen to prevail, there can be no internal motive for virtue,'² and, therefore, we cannot do without a hell. He separates very clearly the question of the criterion from that of the sanction; and he points to the fundamental weakness which is common to the intellectual and to the moral-senses school, whose opposition he accordingly regards as a mere logomachy, of setting up no really intelligible standard of virtue. That standard he discovers in the tendency of all good actions to promote happiness. Virtue is the 'voluntary production of the greatest possible happiness.'³ Thus he tries to supplant Shaftesbury's vague declamation and Clarke's nugatory metaphysics by a fixed and intelligible standard. In fact, the criticism strikes at Shaftesbury's fundamental weakness. He had no more escaped than the intellectual school from the dilemma produced by identifying God with nature, or rather his escape was palpably a mere evasion. He makes nature divine by denying the most patent facts; and is obliged to introduce a kind of tacit Manichæism, by calling the evil passions, when he condescends

¹ Dial. ii. 163.² Ib. p. 184.³ Ib. p. 158.

to speak of them, 'unnatural.' But if there are unnatural things in nature, what becomes of his optimism? Brown's utilitarianism provides a practical rule, though, of course, it does not attempt to answer the problem of the existence of evil. The clearness of his exposition is remarkable, but I may postpone the consideration of the development of his theory in other hands till I have followed the series of writers who may be considered as embodying Shaftesbury's impulse.

IV. THE COMMON-SENSE SCHOOL.

47. The greatest of these, and, with the exception of Hume, the acutest moralist of the century, is Butler, and the characteristic doctrine of Butler is another mode of solving the difficulty just noticed. No two men can present a greater contrast than exists in some respects between Butler and Shaftesbury; the contemplative nature shrinking from the rude contact of the world, and the polished 'virtuoso;' the man to whom life is a weary burden, lightened only by hopes of a future happiness, and yet rendered heavier by the dread of future misery, and the man who is so resolute an optimist as almost to deny the existence of evil—are at opposite poles of feeling; and yet their intellectual relation is close and unmistakable, as, indeed, explicitly admitted by Butler.

48. Butler's sermons, published in 1726, repose fundamentally upon a conception identical with that which was afterwards expounded in the 'Analogy.' The whole theory may be regarded as a modification from a theological point of view of Shaftesbury's doctrines. The fifteenth sermon, for example, on 'the ignorance of man,' contains the germ of the 'Analogy;' and the germ of the fifteenth sermon is to be found in Shaftesbury's conception of the universe as embodying a partially understood 'frame of things.'¹ Shaftesbury's optimism is, indeed, radically opposed to Butler's melancholy temper. The world, regarded as the ante-room to heaven and hell, is no longer that harmonious whole which excited Shaftesbury's facile artistic enthusiasm. Butler—and it is the great secret of his power—is always depressed by the

¹ See, for example, 'Moralists,' part iii. sec. 1.

heavy burden of human misery and corruption. The horror of sin and death weighs upon his spirits. Our wisest course in life is to 'endeavour chiefly to escape misery.'¹ Mitigation of sorrow, rather than actual happiness, is all that can be hoped by his sorely tried soul. Hence nature, the deity of Shaftesbury, is invested by him with the terrible attributes of a judging and avenging God. To prove that the existence of such a God may be inferred from the facts of the universe, is the purpose of the 'Analogy.' To prove the same doctrine from the facts of human nature is the purpose of the Sermons. Nature, as interpreted by Shaftesbury or by Clarke, is too impartial a deity to satisfy his conceptions. It is the cause of evil as well as of good. A beast, drawn to his destruction by a bait, acts 'naturally,' because he gratifies his ruling appetite; a man, drawn to destruction by his ruling appetite, might seem to be in the same case. But 'since such an action is utterly disproportionate to the nature of man, it is, in the strictest and most proper sense, unnatural; this word expressing that disproportion.'² Whence this difference in our judgments? Why condemn a Catiline and not condemn a tiger? Shaftesbury's vague declamation gave, it seemed, no sufficient reply. The *a priori* mode of reasoning, though Butler, with characteristic caution, admits its validity,³ was not so applicable to the men whom he desired to meet. His special method consists in inferring from nature a Creator distinguished, so to speak, by personal idiosyncrasies. He has to show that the God who made alike the good and the bad instincts, takes part with the good and not with the bad; and, moreover, he has to show this from the inspection of the instincts themselves. Nature is to testify to a special design, not to an impartial and abstract reflection of itself. This is the problem ever present to Butler's mind, and his answer to it is the essence of his writings.

49. We have seen how this was done in the 'Analogy.' In the Sermons, the starting-point is identical. The independent system of morality supplied the external point of view from which Butler discovered the character of this life as a probationary state. In the Sermons, the instincts which

¹ Butler's Works, ii. 82, sermon vi.

² *Ib.* preface, p. vii.

³ *Ib.* p. 28, sermon ii.

enable us to recognise this moral law enable him to solve the problem of human nature. Shaftesbury's moral sense becomes with him the conscience—the conscience being no longer an æsthetic perception of the harmony of the universe, but rather the sense of shame which makes our moral nature 'tremble like a guilty thing surprised' in the presence of its Creator. The weakness which he indicates in Shaftesbury's teaching is the absence of a due recognition of the authoritative character of conscience.¹ For conscience is God's viceroy; our nature means 'the voice of God within us.'² To stifle its commands is mere usurpation.³ He compares human nature to a civil constitution, in which conscience plays the part of sovereign.⁴ And thus we discover the true meaning of the ancient phrase of acting in conformity to nature. That formula might be taken to mean acting from any natural impulse, in which case, the same action would at once obey and contradict nature; or it might mean obeying our strongest passions; which, as Butler says with characteristic pessimism, 'being vicious ones, mankind is in this sense naturally vicious.'⁵ As these two meanings fail to reveal a moral law, we must take refuge in a third; namely, that to act according to nature is to obey that power which has a natural supremacy. The conscience, enthroned within our souls, passes an authoritative judgment upon our actions; declares which are right and which wrong; approves the one, condemns the other, and anticipates 'a higher and more effectual sentence.' It is by this 'faculty natural to man that he is a moral agent, that he is a law to himself; by this faculty, I say, not to be considered merely as a principle in his heart, which is to have some influence as well as others; but considered as a faculty in kind and in nature supreme over all others, and which bears its own authority of being so.'⁶ 'Had it strength, as it has right,' he says of the conscience; 'had it power, as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world.'⁷ This is Butler's most characteristic doctrine. The constitution of man, like the constitution of his dwelling-place, points unmis-

¹ Butler's Works, ii. preface, p. xiv.

² Ib. ii. 80, sermon vi.

³ Ib. ii. 33, sermon ii.

⁴ Ib. ii. 34, sermon iii.

⁵ Ib. ii. 25, sermon ii.

⁶ Ib. ii. 27, sermon ii.

⁷ Ib. ii. 31, sermon ii.

takably to his Creator. In both cases we recognise the final causes of the phenomena. 'A man,' he says, 'can as little doubt that his eyes were given him to see with as he can doubt of the truth of the science of optics, deduced from ocular experiments;' he can as little doubt that shame 'was given to him to prevent his doing shameful actions as he can doubt whether his eyes were given him to guide his steps.'¹ The exact correspondence between the natural and moral world, or between the 'inward frame of man' and his external circumstances, is a particular instance of that general law of mutual adaptation which runs through the universe. Thus 'The several passions and affections in the heart of man' afford 'as certain instances of final causes as any whatever, which are more commonly alleged for such.' The correspondence between the organism and the medium, which, from the scientific point of view, is a condition of existence, is with Butler, in morality as in all other questions, a proof of a special purpose of the Creator. What is peculiar to him is the character of those purposes and of the Creator whom they reveal.

50. Butler anticipates and gives a rather singular answer to one difficulty. Why should I obey my conscience? asks the objector. 'Your obligation to obey the law,' he replies, 'is its being the law of your nature;' ² for conscience is 'the guide assigned to us by the author of our nature.' But why should I obey the law? persists the objector; meaning, what private interest have I in obeying it? In answer to this, Butler labours like Shaftesbury to prove that virtue and private interest generally coincide in their directions.³ This anxiety to establish the proposition that it is, on the whole, profitable to be virtuous, fits in rather awkwardly with his system, and is an unfortunate concession to the general spirit of the age.⁴ He expressly promises in the beginning of the eleventh sermon that 'all possible concessions' shall be 'made to the favourite passion' of his age—namely, self-love.⁵ Feeling that the coincidence between the dictates of virtue and a

¹ Butler's Works, ii. 21, sermon ii.

² Ib. ii. 4, sermon i.

³ Ib. ii. 37, sermon iii.

⁴ See, too, the remarkable passage in sermon xi. (ii. 170), where he seems to admit that we cannot justify ourselves in pursuing virtue, or anything else, 'till we are convinced that it will be for our happiness, or, at least, not contrary to it.'

⁵ Butler's Works, ii. 152, sermon xi.

rational self-love is not absolutely perfect, he introduces apologetically, and by way of supplement, what he might more fitly have proclaimed as a leading principle of his system ; and, even then, promises that the discord shall not be definitive. Although exceptions to the general principle are, he says, 'much fewer than are commonly thought,' they exist here, but 'all shall be set right at the final distribution of things.'¹ Thus the selfish will find at last that the man who has sacrificed present advantages to virtue 'has infinitely better provided for himself and secured his own interest and happiness.'²

51. That strain we heard was of a lower mood. Even Butler is bowing his knee in the house of Rimmon ; and, in spite of the depth of his moral sentiments, is consenting to make virtue a question of profit and loss. The whole significance of his theory lies in the mysterious attributes with which conscience is surrounded ; and yet in his anxiety to 'make all possible concessions,' he is endangering the very core of his teaching. This view, however, might be excised with benefit to the general argument. But, meanwhile, a difficulty more vital from a logical point of view passes unnoticed. The supremacy of conscience, says Butler, is a supremacy *de jure* and not *de facto*. We can disobey its dictates ; but, if we disobey them, we act wrongly. What, then, is meant by acting wrongly ? Disobeying conscience ? Then his assertion comes to be that those who disobey conscience—disobey conscience. We disapprove immoral actions, and immoral actions are those which we disapprove. What then is this special supremacy of conscience ? Why is it exceptional ? Every instinct, good or bad, avenges itself by inflicting pain when we resist its dictates. What is the specific peculiarity of the pangs inflicted by conscience ? Conscience, says Butler, brings with it its own credentials ; the supremacy is 'a constituent part of the idea, that is, of the faculty itself ;'³ it is implied in the very meaning of the word duty. The conception of a self-evidencing power seems to involve a vicious circle. Exclude the idea of right from the supremacy, and the statement becomes inaccurate ; admit it, and the definition includes the very thing to be defined. Conscience must, in

¹ Butler's Works, ii. 41, sermon iii.

³ Ib. ii. 31, sermon ii.

² Ib. i. 42, ib.

some way, derive its credentials from some other authority than itself. If, for example, conscience be an infallible guide to those actions which increase the happiness of mankind, its right to govern follows from the beneficial effects of its rule. Butler, however, expressly and indignantly repudiates the doctrine which measures the goodness of actions by their consequences. The inward 'judge of right and wrong,' he tells us, approves or disapproves many actions 'abstracted from the consideration of their tendency' to the happiness or misery of this world.¹ Butler's escape from the vicious circle really consists in his assumption that the conscience represents the will of God. He is blind to the difficulty, because he conceives the final cause of conscience to be evident. This mysterious power, claiming an absolute supremacy, can derive its origin from nothing else than the divine source of all mystery. A blind instinct, ordering us to do this and that, for arbitrary or inscrutable reasons, is entitled to no special respect so long as we confine ourselves to nature. But when behind nature we are conscious of nature's God, we reverence our instincts as implanted by a divine hand, and enquire no further into their origin and purpose. No suspicion occurred to him that the marks of a divine origin which he supposed himself to be discovering by impartial examination, might be merely the result of his having stated the problem in terms of theology. As in the 'Analogy' his argument depends on assuming suffering to be supernatural punishment, so here it depends on assuming the promptings of conscience to be supernatural commands.

52. Around the conscience, in Butler's conception of human nature, are grouped a number of instincts, inferior in authority, but each ruling over the province assigned to it—impelling forces, regulated and controlled by the higher power. The two nearest the throne are benevolence and self-love; beneath them come such passions as, for example, resentment, which also are 'implanted in our nature by God,' and destined to excite us against 'injury and wickedness.'² Even the lower appetites and passions are 'placed within as a

¹ Butler's Works, ii. 191, note, sermon xii., and 'Dissertation on Virtue,' i. 382. See above, ch. v. sec. 13.

² Ib. ii. 114, sermon viii.

guard and further security,' without which our private interests would be neglected.¹ Were it not for hunger, thirst, and weariness, our reason would tell us in vain that food and sleep were necessary for our preservation. The testimony which these arrangements give to a divine design is heightened by a peculiar refinement. The passions, he says, urge us towards '*external things themselves* distinct from the *pleasure arising from them.*'² We eat, that is, for the sake of eating, not because eating is pleasant. The purpose of this doctrine appears more plainly as it was afterwards worked out by Lord Kames, a disciple of Shaftesbury and Butler. Kames tries to evade the doctrine that our will is always determined by pain or pleasure by substituting the words attraction and aversion, and by maintaining, for example, that many unpleasant things have an attraction for us.³ Self-love thus plays a peculiar part in the hierarchy of passions. According to other psychologists, self-love is the aggregate of all our passions; the sum of all the desires which seek for gratification. According to Butler, it is only 'one part of human nature,'⁴ co-ordinate with a vast variety of other passions. It differs from them, however, in this—that its only office is to prompt us to gratify its colleagues. If, he says, there were no passion but self-love, there could be no such thing as happiness.⁵ Thus hunger makes us eat without regarding the pleasure which is to be derived from eating; and then self-love supplies the singular defect by ordering us to gratify our hunger in order to gain the pleasure. It would be simpler to portion out the self-love amongst the various passions instead of distributing the provinces in this curiously arbitrary manner. The psychology is manifestly defective, and its complexity was one reason why Butler failed to impress his contemporaries more decidedly. A cumbrous system, expressed in very loose phraseology, is likely to deter all but the most resolute students. And yet it was only by help of this complex hypothesis, or series of hypotheses, that Butler could manage to put into shape his expression of what was doubtless a most important truth.

¹ Butler's Works, ii. 69, sermon v.

² Ib. ii. 153, sermon xi.

³ 'Essays on Principles of Morality,' &c. See pp. 8, 124.

⁴ Butler's Works, ii. 156, sermon xi.

⁵ Ib. ii. 156, sermon xi.

53. Butler was protesting, like Shaftesbury, against the popular doctrine of the time, which resolved all human actions into selfishness. There is an ambiguity in the statement which has perplexed the speculations of many moralists. Philosophers wished to explain everything, and to explain everything by deduction from a few axiomatic principles. Such a principle seemed to be the selfishness of all actions. The most general statement that can be made about a voluntary action is that it is voluntary; or, in words which seem to be identical, that it is done because the actor pleases, or because the will is determined by the balance of pleasure over pain. All actions, then, may be called selfish in the sense that they are the product of motives acting on a man's self. The proposition is so wide as to be harmless, or, as some writers maintain, useless.¹ 'If,' says Butler, 'because every particular affection is a man's own . . . such particular affection must be called self-love; according to this way of speaking, no creature whatever can possibly act but from self-love.'² The doctrine thus understood is compatible with belief in the most disinterested motives. But, unluckily, selfish had been changed into a sense much narrower, more fruitful of consequences, and essentially debasing. It became, for example, in Mandeville's hands, equivalent to the opinion that men always act upon a calculation of their own private interests. The calculations might be wrong, but the motive was in all cases the same; and actions of self-sacrificing heroism, such, for example, as that of Regulus, became unintelligible paradoxes. Such an axiom was highly convenient as affording an easy foundation for a calculus of human motive. The reaction against the false simplification which it introduced shows itself in Butler's view of the strangely complex constitution of human nature, a peculiarity which is still more conspicuous in some later writers of the school, whilst it urged him to deny that even the particular passions had immediate pleasure

¹ See the obvious argument in Shaftesbury, 'Moralists,' p. 2, sec. 1. 'When will and pleasure are synonymous; when everything which pleases us is called pleasure, and we never choose or prefer but as we please, 'tis trifling to say "pleasure is our good." For this has as little meaning as to say, we choose what we think eligible, and we are pleased with what delights and pleases us.'

² Butler's Works, ii. 154, sermon xi.

for their object.¹ They are divinely implanted impulses, and have no relation to any grovelling motives.

54. Butler's denial that benevolence could by any possibility be resolved into selfishness might dispense with this questionable psychology. He asserts that self-love may be developed in excess, even with a view to our private happiness. 'Disengagement,' he says, 'is absolutely necessary to enjoyment,' and a person may attend so rigidly to his own interests as to lose many opportunities of gratification.² Overfondness for ourselves, like overfondness for children, may defeat its own object. Taking Butler's psychology, the assertion is doubtful; for the injury to our happiness would seem to result not from the excessive strength of the passion, but from an intellectual error, which perplexes our view of our own interests; or from a want of due impartiality, which leads it to prefer one passion to another. But the assertion, less rigidly construed, is undeniable. A man in whose eyes self assumes a disproportionate magnitude is less likely to be happy than one who is absorbed by desire for the happiness of others. Butler shows conclusively the inadequacy of the analysis of all heroism and philanthropy into a love of our own trumpery individuality. He is puzzled and perplexed in his utterance; he mixes his theories with many irrelevant and inconclusive doctrines; he painfully builds up an elaborate system which will not bear serious inspection; he makes needless concessions to the demoralising doctrine which he is denouncing, even at the moment of denouncing it; and yet the protest was as honourable as it was needed at a time when most theologians agreed that nothing but threats of hell could make men virtuous, whilst the belief in hell was yet daily weakening. The theological conception of human vileness remained, whilst the only check applicable to vile creatures was disappearing. Butler would enthrone the conscience in place of self-love. In exalting conscience, it is true, he exemplifies the facile dogmatism of the Common-Sense school, and his attempted expulsion of self-love makes the

¹ Shaftesbury puts this very clearly ('Wit and Humour,' part iii. sec. 3), where he objects to those who would reduce all the balances and weights of the human heart to simple selfishness.

² Butler's Works, ii. 157, sermon xi.

mechanism of human nature singularly cumbrous. But, with all his faults, Butler remains, in a practical sense, the deepest moralist of the century. He alone refuses to shut his eyes with the optimistic theists to the dark side of the world, and yet does not, with their opponents, implicitly deny the existence of virtue. Seeing God through conscience, the same faculty which reveals to him the prevalence of vice, reveals also the antagonistic force opposed to it. The description of the sense of duty as the voice of God must be pronounced an error, if by those words we mean that it implies a supernatural guidance, that it is enforced by supernatural sanctions, and inculcates a course of conduct directed to fit men, not for this world, but for the next. But Butler's language, regarded as the utterance of a deep conviction of the unspeakable importance of our moral instincts, conveyed a profound rebuke to his age. Talk about nature and harmony, he says to the easy-going optimists of the Shaftesbury type, may be very charming to æsthetic philosophers, but it will not sway the brutal passions of mankind. Your denial that virtue exists, he says to Mandeville, or your assertion that virtue is merely a name for clever calculation of your own private interests, he says to the utilitarians of his time, is in various degrees debasing and unsatisfactory. You have not yet found a successor to the old God. Theology, in him, seems to utter an expiring protest against the meanness and the flimsiness of the rival theories by which men attempted to replace it. His theory of the universe is distorted, gloomy, and radically unscientific. But it takes into account the dark side from which shallow metaphysicians averted their faces; it rejects the debasing conceptions which followed when the divine element was exiled from the existing world with nothing offered in its place; and it emphatically asserted that conscience was a mystery which had not yet received a sufficient explanation. His error lay in the assumption that because the instinct, which moved him so deeply, was unexplained, it was therefore supernatural. He endeavours to honour conscience by taking it altogether out of the sphere of scientific observation, and forcing it to bear testimony not to the goodness which counteracts the many vices and weaknesses of humanity, but to the interference of an extramundane power; and thus cling-

ing to the dogma of corruption whilst asserting the existence of virtuous instincts in man.

55. Butler has thus endeavoured to evade the great dilemma by absorbing nature in God as revealed to conscience, instead of absorbing God in nature. Each man is a little kingdom in himself, with a constitution of divine origin ; and our duty consists in observing its laws, though we know not the purpose for which they were ordained. The position occupied by Hutcheson may be roughly described by saying that, whilst holding a very similar theory, the constitution, with him, no longer rests upon divine right, but is justified as conducive to the welfare of the subject. He therefore forms a connecting link between the utilitarians and the intuitional school ; and his writings bring out very distinctly the relations between the two systems.

56. Francis Hutcheson¹ was the son of a dissenting minister, in the North of Ireland, and the descendant of a Scotch family. He represents that variety of theology in which the old Calvinism was replaced by eighteenth-century rationalism, whilst the old hatred to priestcraft survived. Like Butler, he had an early correspondence with Clarke, and is said to have retained a profound conviction of the futility of the *a priori* method of that philosopher. Perhaps his dislike to orthodox systems went a little further. At any rate, he accepted the offer of a 'private academy' in Dublin, instead of becoming a minister according to his first intention. Whilst in Dublin he published his 'Enquiry into the Ideas of Beauty and Virtue,' and soon afterwards a 'Treatise on the Passions.' In 1729 he accepted the chair of moral philosophy in the University of Glasgow, and remained there till his death in the fifty-third year of his age (1747). The only blemish which his enthusiastic biographer can discover in his character is a certain quickness of temper. He gave offence, it seems, by 'honest freedom ;' but otherwise lived as became a professor of moral philosophy. The tone of his writings is amiable, though in him, as in most of his contemporaries, we are apt to be annoyed at the exceeding placidity and complacency with which this questionable world is contemplated. The awful shadow of sin and misery never

¹ See Life by Leechman, prefixed to 'System of Moral Philosophy.'

clouds his spirits. In striking contrast to Butler, he is smooth, voluble, and discursive ; and the even flow of his eloquence is apt to become soporific. The ' System of Moral Philosophy ' appeared in 1755, eight years after his death, and gives the fullest account of his system ; but the essence is contained in his earlier treatises.

57. Hutcheson is a far more servile disciple of Shaftesbury than Butler, and his easy-going optimism resembles that of his master. ' Happiness,' he tells us, ' is far superior to misery, even in this present world,' and he lays little stress upon the other.¹ God is everywhere revealed in nature. The ' stupendous orbs ' (a cant phrase which at once stamps the argument), the convenient arrangements of the earth and the solar system, and the structure of animals, testify unmistakably to the beneficent Creator. Our sufferings are ' the kind admonitions and exhortations of the Universal Parent ; ' ² and we may enable ourselves to meet cheerfully all apparent evils by ' a firm persuasion of an omnipotent, omniscient, and most benign Universal Parent, disposing of all things in this system for the very best . . . and permitting no further evil than what the most proper constitution requires or necessarily brings along with it.' ³ His theology differs from Shaftesbury's, by attributing a slightly more distinct personality to the Creator ; the Universal Parent is not so closely identified with nature ; and, instead of an all-pervading harmony, Hutcheson prefers to use the more technical and definite phraseology of final causes. The chief difference between the master and the disciple is, that Hutcheson forces into the framework of a system the doctrines which are in a state of solution in Shaftesbury's rather turbid eloquence. This is especially the case with the ' moral sense '—a term which had been used by Shaftesbury, though with no special emphasis, whilst in Hutcheson it becomes the keystone of an elaborate system. By explaining its nature and functions, we shall give the essential principle of Hutcheson's philosophy.

58. ' The mind,' says Shaftesbury, ' . . . cannot be without its eye and ear, so as to discern proportion, distinguish sound, and scan each sentiment and thought which comes before it.' It detects the harmonious and the dissonant in affections as

¹ ' System of Moral Philosophy,' i. 190.

² *Ib.* i. 185.

³ *Ib.* i. 215.

the bodily eye detects them in outward things.¹ Hutcheson takes up this hint, and presents the resulting theory in a compact form in the opening of the 'Enquiry concerning Beauty and Virtue.' We have, as he puts it, internal as well as external senses; the external perceiving sounds and colours as the internal perceive moral excellence or turpitude.² This theory is worked up into an elaborate psychological analysis in the opening chapters of the 'System of Moral Philosophy.' He there endeavours to anatomise the complex internal organisation by which our actions are determined; for, as he remarks, 'human happiness which is the end of this art' (the art, that is, of morality) 'cannot be distinctly known without the knowledge of the constitution of this species.'³ Beyond and above the senses which reveal the external world and provide us with all our 'materials of knowledge,'⁴ we have a number of 'finer perceptions,'⁵ which he proceeds to enumerate. There are the senses of beauty and harmony, or of the imagination; the sympathetic sense, the sense which causes us to take pleasure in action, the moral sense, the sense of honour, the sense of decency and dignity, a parental, and social, and religious sense. Each of these senses produces, or is identical with, a certain 'determination of the will.' There is a determination of the will towards our own happiness, and another, not resolvable into the first, and entitled to override it in cases of conflict, towards the 'universal happiness of others.'⁶ The system, already sufficiently complex, is further perplexed by cross-divisions of the various passions which appear to be identical with the senses, into selfish and benevolent, extensive and limited, calm and turbulent; and we are ready, after reading the list, to agree fully with Hutcheson's observation that human nature must 'appear a very complex and confused fabric, unless we can discover some order and subordination among these powers.'⁷ The complexity is reached by the simple device, common to many metaphysicians, of assuming that to every name that can be given corresponds a distinct entity. He makes, however, very little

¹ Shaftesbury, 'Virtue,' book 1 part ii. sec. 3

² Hutcheson's 'Inquiry' &c. i. sec. 10.

³ 'Moral Philosophy,' i. 1.

⁴ Ib. p. 6.

⁵ Ib. p. 7.

⁶ Ib. p. 9.

⁷ Ib. p. 38.

use of these elaborate divisions and cross-divisions in working out his theory; and we need only remember that human nature is, in his opinion, a machine of innumerable parts skilfully put together for benign purposes by the Divine artisan; and that each sense has a final cause which reveals itself to the reverent observer.

59. It is enough to speak of the moral sense. The procedure that it is an independent faculty is, that none of the methods hitherto applied have resolved it into simpler elements. It cannot be analysed into sympathy, for we approve the virtues of our enemies; nor into the pleasure derivable from virtuous action, for it is the root and not the fruit of that pleasure; nor into a perception of utility to the agent or the approbation for bad actions may be useful as well as good; nor can it be derived from approval of conformity to the divine will, for the moral attributes of God must be previously known; nor from conformity to the truth or fitness of things, for that is a nugatory definition.¹ It remains, then, so Hutcheson assumes, that the moral sense must be a primitive faculty.

60. What, in the next place, are its functions? Is it an internal teacher, making known to us, by declarations from which there is no appeal, that such an action is right, and such another action wrong? In that case, our duty would be revealed to us by a series of direct intuitions. Hutcheson, however, follows Locke in denying that we have innate ideas. The moral sense perceives virtue and vice as the eye perceives light and darkness; but it no more frames general propositions than the external sense provides us with mathematical theorems. The object of the sense is merely the internal feeling; and our judgments of actions may vary indefinitely as we infer that they proceed from one or other motive. He anticipates and retorts the ordinary objection that, to make the moral sentiments dependent upon feeling, is to make them variable. The variety in our judgments is 'not owing to any irregularity in the moral sense, but to a wrong judgment or opinion.'² Putting the aged to death 'really tends to the public good,' it is a good action; and circumstances are conceivable in which this would actually be the case; as, for example, in a

¹ 'Moral Philosophy,' book i. ch. iv.

'Inquiry,' sec. iv.

² 'Inquiry,' sec. i. § 8, and 'System,' i. 97.

overloaded boat in a storm. Different courses of action may be approved as they may flow from the same affections. And thus the moral sense is simply a natural tendency to approve certain affections which tend to the public good. It approves the benevolent affections directly, and indirectly it leads us to approve such actions, and such actions alone, as flow from goodwill, or, at lowest, from dispositions 'which exclude the highest selfishness.'¹ Benevolence, for example, meets with the highest, fortitude and veracity² meet with lower degrees of approval. To the self-regarding virtues he assigns, like Shaftesbury, an inferior place, and, indeed, falls into the assumption that a tendency to promote the public happiness is not only the measure of goodness in actions, but should be the sole motive to performing them.

61. The complication which follows from Hutcheson's theory that 'to each of our powers we seem to have a corresponding taste or sense commending the proper use of it to the agent, and making him relish or value the like exercise of it by another,'³ is characteristic; and were it removed, the moral sense would become identical with the benevolent instincts. The result of this false analysis is to produce a curious and more important confusion. The moral sense, as we discover, and as is apparent from remarks just quoted, approves the benevolent affections because, and in so far as, they conduce to the public good. From considering the moral sense, he tells us, we might 'proceed to consider more particularly the several offices of life, and to discover what partial affections and actions consequent upon them are to be entirely approved, as beneficial to some part of the system, and perfectly consistent with the general good; and what appetites and affections, even of a beneficial kind, though they may be useful to a part, are pernicious to the general system, and thus deduce the special laws of nature from this moral faculty and generous determination of soul.'⁴ We find, in short, that Hutcheson uses two standards—the public good, and the approval of the moral sense—and uses them indifferently, because he is convinced of their absolute identity. In his discussion of particular problems, the moral sense

¹ 'System,' i. 63.

² *Ib.* i. 66.

³ *Ib.* i. 59.

⁴ *Ib.* i. 98.

passes out of sight altogether, and he becomes a pure utilitarian.

62. Hutcheson, indeed, appears to have been the first person to proclaim the celebrated formula, 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number.'¹ This principle is thoroughly interwoven into his system. 'The moral faculty,' he tells us, 'most approves and recommends such dispositions as tend most to the general good, and, at the same time, such as may give the noblest enjoyment to the agent upon consideration ;'² for, like Shaftesbury, he takes great pains to prove that virtue is happiness even to the individual. Still more expressly, he declares that 'the ultimate notion of right is that which tends to the universal good.'³ He attacks Butler for asserting that there can be any other justification of punishment than 'the tendency of sufferings to the public good,'⁴ and points out very clearly the confusion produced in this instance by Butler's habitual confusion between punishment and suffering. Finally, he maintains that a precept of the Law of Nature is 'no more than a conclusion from observation of what sort of conduct is ordinarily useful to society.'⁵ Hutcheson, in short, though he occasionally refers to the metaphysical doctrine of compacts underlying certain social arrangements, refers habitually and distinctly to utility as the sole and sufficient measure of virtue.

63. Hutcheson, then, substantially propounds a problem. His 'moral sense' is nothing but the approval of such affections, and consequently of such courses of action, as are most conducive to the public welfare. How, then, does it happen that such affections and actions are approved? Hutcheson assumes that because none of the ordinary explanations are

¹ Hutcheson's use of this phrase occurs in the 'Inquiry concerning Moral Good and Evil,' sec. iii. § 8. 'In the same manner,' he says, 'the moral evil or vice' (of a given action) 'is as the degree of misery and number of sufferers ; so that that action is best which procures the greatest happiness of the greatest numbers.' In Bentham's Works, x. 79, 80, it is said that Bentham first thought of the principle on reading Priestley's 'Treatise on Government.' At p. 142 the alternative is suggested that the phrase may have been borrowed from Beccaria who, in the preface to his essay on crimes and punishments, condemns laws which have not been made from the point of view of *la massima felicità divisa ne maggior numero*. Hutcheson has clearly the right of priority, whatever the value of the thing claimed.

² 'System,' i. 139.

³ *Ib.* p. 266.

⁴ *Ib.* p. 256.

⁵ *Ib.* p. 273.

sufficient, no explanation can be given except the divine ordinance. God enters his system, not as the supreme judge and awarder of rewards and penalties, but as the skilful contriver of an harmonious system. Man is a machine of vast complexity, so put together that the resultant of its various forces always points in that direction which is most beneficial to society. The origin of our moral sentiments remains, as with Butler, a mystery; but the end to which they point is no longer mysterious. The moral sense is a kind of Ithuriel's spear, which, when brought into contact with our affections, reveals their true quality, showing the angelic nature of those which are conducive to the public good and the diabolical character of those which are opposed to it. Or it resembles the fabulous cups which detected the poison lurking in any drink poured into them; and enables us to reject the anti-social, and accept the social emotions. When utility was thus recognised as the criterion of virtue, it required but one step to admit that it was also the cause of moral approbation. That step was taken by Hume, who had some personal relations with Hutcheson; but Hutcheson explicitly declined to accept an explanation which appeared to be equivalent to resolving virtue into selfishness.

64. The ethical speculations of Reid, the most eminent writer of the Common-Sense school, are contained in his 'Essays on the Active Powers,' but would scarcely justify a prolonged analysis. They may be described briefly as a combination of the views of Clarke and Shaftesbury, though most resembling those of Butler. Recognising the nugatory character of Clarke's theory,¹ he also thinks that to adopt Shaftesbury's theory would be to make morality arbitrary, as dependent upon a 'natural or acquired taste.'² The conscience, therefore, which guides our moral judgments, is at once, in his language, an intellectual and an active power, and its supremacy is, as with Butler, an ultimate and self-evident fact.³ This power, which is simply common sense applied to moral questions, is, of course, capable of laying down as many first principles as may be required.⁴ Here, as elsewhere, the difficulty of finding an ultimate justification for axioms is evaded

¹ Reid's Works, p. 676

² *Ib.* pp 597, 598.

³ *Ib.* p 534.

⁴ *Ib.* p 637, &c.

by simply declaring that no justification is needed ; but there is nothing in Reid's ethical doctrine which had not been more articulately worked out by his predecessors, except that his facility in multiplying first principles is, perhaps, more marked and his ethical philosophy proportionally weaker.

V. HARTLEY AND ADAM SMITH.

65. Two remarkable attempts were made at explaining the mechanism of the mysterious power postulated by the Common-Sense school. Hutcheson had spoken slightly of sympathy, and of the association of ideas as means of explaining our moral judgments. Sympathy was, in his eyes, merely a variety of selfishness. We dislike seeing pain in others because it produces a sympathetic pain in ourselves. And such a feeling would not account for a moral sentiment in cases where his sympathetic action could not be set up. A brave man dying is interested in the fate of his family, though he would know that their suffering after his death could inflict no pain upon him.¹ Association again is briefly noticed as useful in many ways, but also as exciting a disturbing influence. It leads us, for example, to dislike or admire certain actions, without asking whether our feelings are justified by reason, or produced only by an accidental collocation of circumstances. Hartley endeavoured to make association the fundamental law of our intellectual and emotional nature ; and Adam Smith tried to resolve all our moral sentiments into sympathy.

66. David Hartley published his 'Observations on Man' in 1749. He had been a Fellow of Jesus College, Cambridge, but being deterred by some scruples from taking orders, became a physician. To the writings of Sir Isaac Newton and Locke he owed, as his son tells us,² the first stimulant to his intellect, but the hint which immediately suggested his peculiar theory came from a Mr. Gay, who afterwards published his sentiments in a dissertation prefixed to Law's translation of King's 'Origin of Evil.' The candour which prompted this avowal is in harmony with the admirable simplicity, truthful-

¹ 'System,' 1. 48.

² See Life prefixed to vol. iii. of Works.

ness, and elevation which animated his book and his life. Anyone who should read the last pages of his treatise, in which he prophesies, with singular insight, the approach of a terrible revolution,¹ might probably declare that Hartley's peculiar characteristic was his opposition to the materialising tendencies of his age. And yet Hartley was philosophically a materialist. He was preaching substantially the same doctrines which were advocated by his contemporary Condillac. Man, according to him, is nothing but a bundle of 'vibratiuncles'—a kind of barrel-organ set in motion by the external forces of the world. Yet turn over a few pages and Hartley appears in the character of a Christian advocate, refuting the infidel by the same arguments, though not with the same brutality, as his friend Warburton. Go a little further, and it might appear that Hartley is a disciple of Spinoza, to whom the highest good is self-annihilation and absorption in the Deity. Certainly, a strange combination; and yet it must be added that Hartley is a consecutive reasoner, whose theory sins rather by excessive simplicity than by undue complication. The explanation of the paradox is partly to be sought in the ease with which the phraseology of any system may be pressed into the service of any other; partly in a real inconsistency due to his desire to satisfy his moral instinct even at the price of his logic; but partly, also, in the fact that the inconsistency is not so great as appears at first sight.

67. The doctrine which lies at the bottom of Hartley's scheme is the belief in necessity. He realises almost as clearly as Spinoza the truth that all events in the universe, including the phenomena of human action, are links in an eternal chain of causes and effects. 'The cause of the cause,' he says, is also 'the cause of the thing caused'²—a truism which many people allow to lie in their minds without really affecting their conceptions. Now 'God is the cause of all things'—matter is a 'mere passive thing,' and therefore every motion comes ultimately from a divinely communicated impulse.³ God is eternal, omnipresent, immutable, and has all

¹ See the very remarkable passage, Hartley 'On Man,' ii. 440 *et seq.*

² *Ib.* ii. 428; part ii. prop. 94.

³ *Ib.* ii. 31; part ii. prop. 6.

possible perfections ; he is free, though freedom can only be predicated of him in the sense of his not being subject to any external compulsion.¹ Neither is man any exception to the universal action of the Deity. Hartley denied that he was a materialist, in the sense of believing the materiality of the soul. When arguing for a future state, he leaves it doubtful whether the soul is an immaterial substance or an 'elementary infinitesimal body,' a germ or atom which receives the sensation, and whose existence survives that of the organism within which it is placed.² His system, however, clearly renders a soul a superfluity, if not an anomaly. The will, the thoughts, and the emotions, not only result from, but, as it would seem, are 'vibratiuncles,' that is, miniature vibrations set up in our bodies. Like all other material motions, they are therefore due—it matters not whether directly or indirectly—to the Divine Impulse. God is the one efficient cause, and all the phenomena of human life are but the waves stirred by him in the infinite ocean of existence. Hartley is, so far, a materialist Spinoza ; nor, it would seem, does it make very great difference whether we call that substance which is the medium transmitting the divine impulses matter or spirit. In either case we are equally ignorant of its ultimate essence. There are, indeed, with Hartley, two substances ; but matter is merely the senseless mass tossed hither and thither by the omnipresent and omnipotent force which we call God.

68. Further, it necessarily follows from this conception that Hartley is a consistent optimist. The universe being but the raw material provided for the display of the divine energy, corresponds to the perfection of its Creator. It is the cast moulded in its minutest details upon infinite beneficence. The infinite happiness and perfection of God is a 'pledge of the ultimate happiness and perfection of all his creatures.'³ Assuming the Calvinist doctrine of the supreme will of God, he rejects the Calvinist conclusion that some men can have

¹ Hartley, ii. 35, part ii. prop. ix.

² *Ib.* ii. 388, &c. ; part ii prop. 86, and see his comparison of his own system with those of Leibnitz and Malebranche (i. 111 ; part i. prop. 21, cor. 3).

³ *Ib.* ii. 421 ; part ii. prop. 94.

been made for eternal happiness and others for eternal misery.¹ Nay, he even ventures to maintain, though some of his terms require a special interpretation, a doctrine 'which at first sight seemed not only contrary to obvious experience, but even impossible—viz. that all individuals are actually and always infinitely happy.'² The theory sounds like optimism run mad. It is curious that Hartley should have persuaded himself that such opinions were consistent with the Christian dogmas, elastic as those dogmas had become in the hands of the rationalist school. The explanation is partly that a philosophy resting exclusively upon experience can adapt itself easily to a religion resting upon evidence. Hartley, for example, is ready to accept miracles which Spinoza declared upon *a priori* grounds to be irrational. The difference between Hartley and the older metaphysicians may be described by saying that with them the type of all reasoning is to be found in pure mathematics, whilst with him it is to be found in applied mathematics. He seeks to do for human nature what Newton did for the solar system. Association is for man what gravitation is for the planets; and as Newton imagined that God's will must be the efficient cause of gravitation, so Hartley imagined the same will to be the cause of those movements in the human organism which are the immediate cause of all mental phenomena.³ He is about the last writer who affects the mathematical form common to the metaphysicians of the previous generation, but in his mind the analogy is not with the pure mathematics which, dealing with ideas of space and time, seem to have an *a priori* validity, but with those laws of motion which he would have asserted (as indeed he would have asserted of all axiomatic truths) to be derived from experience.

69. Dropping the peculiar theory of vibratiuncles which Priestley afterwards excised from his system with small injury to its coherency,⁴ the theory, so far as morality is concerned,

¹ Hartley, ii. 421.

² *Ib.* ii. 29; part ii. prop. 4.

³ See i. 351, where he says that all enquiries may ultimately be put into mathematical forms, and all categories be reduced to quantity alone. His classification of the sciences, part i. prop. 88, evidently implies this conception. All 'natural philosophy' is with him reducible to laws such as those of gravitation. Hume also compares association to gravitation (see Works, i. 321)

⁴ See 'The Theory of the Human Mind,' by Priestley, 1775.

may be pretty simply stated. He holds, in opposition to Locke, that all ideas are derived from sensation, the remaining ideas of reflection being simply the residuum which Locke was incapable of sufficiently analysing.¹ The ideas which thus enter the mind are gradually transformed by force of association into more complex products. The pleasures and pains which are compounded of the primary sensations may be divided into seven classes: (1) sensation; (2) imagination; (3) ambition; (4) self-interest; (5) sympathy; (6) theopathy; and (7) the moral sense. The pleasures and pains of sensation are the ultimate irresoluble facts. From them are generated the pleasures and pains of the imagination. From these two, again, in various combinations, arise the pleasures and pains of ambition. From the three thus obtained, the pleasures and pains of self-interest, and so on. But, again, each class of pleasures and pains reacts upon the previous classes; and thus we have wholes too complex to admit of complete analysis.² In mathematical language it may be said that six equations arise from stating each of the latter six classes in terms of all the others; and thus it is possible to determine every one of the other classes as functions of the primitive sensations. The problem is ingeniously worked out in each case; but the process is too complicated and too unsatisfactory to be worth following.

70. Upon this foundation Hartley erects his theory of the rule of life. The innumerable pains and pleasures, as they strike upon our sense, cause vibrations which tend to coalesce. Association thus converts a state in which both pleasure and pain are felt by turns into a state in which pure pleasure and pure pain are alone perceived. But as pleasures are more numerous than pains, the resulting state will be generally one of pleasure alone; and thus, ultimately, association has 'a tendency to reduce the state of those who have eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil back again to a paradisaical one.'³ The painful element is gradually absorbed in the pleasurable, until at last it is altogether eliminated. By a similar process we may trace the proper course to be pursued

¹ Hartley, i. 360; part i. prop. 88.

² Ib. i. 369; part i. prop. 89.

³ Ib. i. 83; part i. prop. 14, cor. 9.

by each individual. Mankind is endued with a desire of obtaining happiness;¹ but this desire, when properly regulated, leads not to selfishness, but to an utter annihilation of self. Analysing each of the classes of the pleasure, Hartley discovers that in each case the purest enjoyment is derived from those pleasures which border upon the higher class. The sensual and the purely selfish pleasures should be sought only in strict subordination to the love of man and the love of God. By a process of successive approximations (the mathematical analogy is always present to his mind) the lower desires will thus be gradually merged in the higher, till we arrive at 'perfect self-annihilation and the pure love of God.'² The moral sense in Hartley's classification lies above theopathy; but the moral sense is the 'sum total'³ of all the others, and not a distinct faculty. It represents the state of mind which results when the whole nature is brought into its final harmony. We begin as animals, with nothing but sensations; we should end as angels rapt in the beatific vision of the all-perfect Creator. Hartley expresses his conclusion in that queer mathematical mysticism which is characteristic of the strange contrasts of his system. Let W., he says, represent the love of the world; F, the fear, and L, the love of God. Then we may say that $W : F :: F : L$ or $W = \frac{F^2}{L}$. In our initial state we fear God infinitely more than we love him; and love the world infinitely more than we fear God. In our final state, the ratios should be reversed, and the love of the world be swallowed up in the fear, and that again in the love of God. W, that is, should approach indefinitely to zero; and L must, therefore, be indefinitely greater than F.⁴ The good Hartley smiles complacently at the 'new and compendious light' which he has thus thrown upon the most important of all problems. He has compressed religion into a pocket formula.

71. The kernel of his system of course lies in that theory of association which provides the machinery for this curious transformation, by which vibratuncles set up in the medullary substance of the brain are ultimately converted into the pure

¹ Hartley, u. 197; part ii. prop. 46.

² Ib. ii. 282; part ii. prop. 67.

³ Ib. i. 497; part i. prop. 99.

⁴ Ib. ii. 329; part ii prop. 72 (Scholium).

love of God. The general doctrine is familiar enough. The miser loves money as an end, because he has associated it with the pleasures produced by money. As we thus learn to value the cause from first valuing the thing caused, we are led by the necessity of our natures to rest at last 'upon him who is the inexhaustible fountain of all power, knowledge, goodness, majesty, glory, property, &c.'¹ By the same process children learn to love the parents, attendants, or playfellows, who are the cause of most of their pleasures. The amusements which we share with others have the same tendency; the honour procured by benevolence, and the pleasures of religion and the moral sense, tend to strengthen the early associations, and thus, without any direct expectation of reward, or even of subsidiary pleasure, benevolence becomes an ultimate object for its own sake. 'And this,' says Hartley, 'I take to be a proof from the doctrine of association, that there is, and must be, such a thing as pure disinterested benevolence; also a just account of the origin and nature of it.'²

72. This is Hartley's contribution to a moral theory. Its value and its limitations are tolerably clear. The great problem of contemporary moralists was to solve an apparent contradiction. The purely selfish solution—the doctrine, that is, that the man neither does nor can act except from a regard to his own interests—has a terrible plausibility, especially when all philosophy is obliged to start from the consideration of the individual mind, instead of contemplating the social organism. The very existence of 'altruistic' sentiments appears to be contradictory, from this point of view. Some writers denied, with Mandeville, that they existed, or, with Butler and Hutcheson, regarded the faculty which sanctions them as in some sense supernatural. Hartley still retains the conception of final causes, but endeavours to lay bare the machinery by which they work. The process by which a regard for self is gradually refined into pure love of God or our neighbours is still the work of a divine hand, but it may be studied, analysed, and shown to conform to certain

¹ Hartley, i. 463; part 1. prop. 96.

² *Ib.* i. 474, part 1. prop. 97.

general laws.'¹ No one had explained the power of association in regard to the emotions with so much ingenuity, and, as association is doubtless a true cause, Hartley had the merit of really improving our conception of the mode in which the moral sentiments are generated in the individual. So few men have really added to our limited stock of moral theories, that the merit must be regarded as a very high one. On the other hand, the value of Hartley's speculation is confined to this branch of ethical speculation. It is a general weakness of his system, resulting from its mode of ignoring ultimate philosophical problems, that he never seems to allow for general truths. Why does not each of those bundles of vibratuncles which we call brains, differing in nature, and exposed to infinitely various conditions, grind out a different set of truths? How can there be a universal system of morality? Hartley seems to prove that each individual must tend, as time goes on, to become more exclusively animated by the love of God—a result which is at least opposed to the ordinary views of human experience. The formation of a moral standard is not definitely explained; though some theory might be accommodated to his system. But, without going into metaphysical questions, it is plain that this weakness is significant of the individualist method of Hartley, and that, on his own showing, the doctrine requires to be supplemented by a study of the reciprocal action upon each other of different members of the race. In other words, Hartley's doctrine is defective from the absence of any sociology, or even of the perception that some sociological theory is necessary to frame a moral doctrine based upon experience. He might then have anticipated the teaching of some cognate schools in later times.

73. Adam Smith's 'Theory of Moral Sentiments' appeared in 1759,² and won a rapid popularity, though producing little conviction. The qualities of thought and style which afterwards caused the success of the 'Enquiry into the Wealth of Nations' are equally visible in its predecessor. Smith's ingenious and discursive intellect pours itself out in

¹ Hartley's doctrine coincides curiously on some points with Comte's teaching as to the cultivation of the altruistic sentiments.

² A tenth edition in 1804.

streams of diffuse eloquence, often brilliant with felicitous illustrations, and quick flashes of historical insight, and yet wide rather than deep, rather dexterous in new combinations than penetrating the essence of the subject, and therefore apt to disappoint us by a certain superficiality. Smith's ingenuity in tracing the working of the mechanism of human nature is so marked and so delightful to himself that he almost forgets to enquire into the primary forces which set it in action. He describes the mutual action and reaction of the passions with more fidelity than the passions themselves. Smith, in fact, is a thorough representative of that optimistic Deism which we have seen illustrated by Shaftesbury and Hutcheson. Hutcheson, Smith's predecessor in the chair of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow,¹ was in this respect nearer to Smith than was Smith's friend and teacher, Hume. The characteristic difference appears in this, that Smith follows Hutcheson and departs from Hume in making the doctrine of final causes an essential part of his system. Although we have no longer that extraordinary complex machinery of primitive instincts which, according to Butler and Hutcheson, had been mysteriously implanted in our bosom as divinely appointed monitors, yet Smith constantly regards human nature as a mechanism skilfully contrived to carry out the divine purposes. He simplifies the construction with a view to a rational explanation; but the action of the artificer is still discernible. Superfluous wheels and pulleys have been removed, but the general conception remains.

74. His theology rests essentially upon the 'whatever is is right' dogma. He believes in a 'great, benevolent, and all-wise Being,' who is determined by his own perfections to maintain in the universe at all times 'the greatest possible quantity of happiness.'² A belief in a future life is necessary to make us happy in this, and to 'illumine the dreary prospect of its continually approaching mortality.'³ The doctrine is so cheering that every virtuous man must earnestly wish to believe it; and disbelief has only been produced b

¹ Hutcheson died in 1747. Craigie, his successor, was succeeded by Smith in 1752.

² Smith's 'Moral Sentiments,' ii. 98; part vi. sec. 2, ch. iii.

³ Ib. i. 267; part iii. ch. ii.

its perversion to ascetic purposes.¹ He quotes with indignation a passage in which Massillon, in preaching to a military audience, eloquently compares the hardships endured by a soldier to the penances endured by a monk; and proclaims that one day of a soldier's devotion might, if applied in a different direction, have won eternal happiness. When the rewards and penalties of futurity are perverted to secure the salvation of gloomy ascetics, and to ensure the damnation of heroes, statesmen, and philosophers, the doctrine is unnaturally opposed to all our moral sentiments.² A cheerful discharge of daily duties proceeding from an equable and social temper is, in his opinion, the truest wisdom. 'Happiness,' he says, 'consists in tranquillity and enjoyment,'³ and enjoyment follows almost of necessity from tranquillity. With this moderate estimate of human wants it is easy to believe, and to rejoice in the belief, that there are twenty people happy for one in misery.⁴ 'What,' he characteristically asks, 'can be added to the happiness of the man who is in health, who is out of debt, and has a clear conscience?'⁵ and this, he adds, is the actual condition of the greatest part of mankind. The sight of the universe and of the human race excites in him neither lofty raptures nor melancholy misgivings, but a kind of placid complacency, which he describes as belief in God.

75. The benevolence of the Creator shows itself in the skilful adaptation of human passions to produce this result. Nature (which is the polite term for God) has made us worshippers of rank and fortune, because she 'wisely judged' that order would be more secure when resting on visible distinctions than on the obscure qualities of virtue and wisdom. Hume explains the snobbishness of mankind by the obvious consideration that we naturally admire what is useful to us. In Adam Smith's view it becomes a mysterious arrangement of Providence, designed for the good of society.⁶

¹ Adam Smith, i. 268, part iii. ch. ii.

² Ib. i. 302, part iii. ch. ii.

³ Ib. i. 271, ib.

⁴ Ib. i. 282, ib.

⁵ Ib. i. 87; part i. sec. 3, ch. 1. The phrase perhaps comes from Pope ('Essay on Man,' iv. 80), who says that all happiness consists in 'health, peace, and competence;' and Pope here follows Bolingbroke almost verbally (Bolingbroke's Works, v. 298).

⁶ Adam Smith, ii. 78; part vii. sec. 2, ch. 1.

The theory of the method is given with great clearness by Smith himself. After adducing the ordinary illustration of the watch, he remarks that we frequently mistake the end promoted by the existence of a given sentiment for the efficient cause of the sentiment; and thus 'imagine that to be the wisdom of man which in reality is the Wisdom of God.'¹ Thus, as he goes on to say in tacit reference to Hume, the utility of just laws being obvious, it has been supposed that the utility was the cause of our approval of the enforcement of such laws. In opposition to this Smith argues that, although the utility has a certain influence, the sentiment of justice is excited in all men, and especially in the unthinking, by a spontaneous movement which does not take utility into account. Sympathy with the injured man excites our anger against a thief, and not any concern for the general interests of society. Smith's argument would be conclusive against a reasoner who should assert that the utility of an action was not merely the criterion of its morality, but also the immediate ground of our approval or disapproval. That would, of course, be a very crude statement of the utilitarian view. Smith's criticism, however, is significant of his position, and gives the starting-point of his special theory.

76. He holds that the moral sentiments contribute blindly to promote the happiness of mankind. Our anger against evildoers falls in by an undesigned coincidence—undesigned, that is, so far as we are concerned—with the general disposition of Providence to promote the greatest possible amount of happiness. But if not designed by us, it must have been designed by the Creator. The theory is, therefore, directed against a palpable weakness of the doctrine as generally expounded. It is easy to perceive that a dim perception of the utility of certain actions may have gradually generated moral sentiments which have no longer a conscious reference to the necessity which produced them. But until this distinction had been plainly drawn, it was a natural objection to the utilitarian theory that moral approval frequently did not involve any distinct recognition of the utility of actions. The instincts which had grown up by a complex process seemed, to observers still unable to place themselves at the historical point

¹ Adam Smith, i. 178; part ii. sec. 2, ch. iii.

of view, to have something mysterious about them. Philosophers talked not of concrete men, but of abstract human nature, assumed, or rather loudly asserted, to be the same in all times and places. They did not think of our instincts as slowly developed under the influence of a thousand modifying causes through long generations, but as suddenly springing into existence ready made. And to such observers it was natural that the conformity between our wants and our sentiment should appear to be the result of special contrivance, rather than of slow evolution. Smith, however, regards the moral sense described by Hutcheson as a superfluity, and as not properly explaining the phenomena. Our judgments of different vices and virtues vary too widely to be explained as the dictates of one sense; and it would be strange if an instinct so important and so peculiar should have been discovered for the first time within a few years, and not even have received a name.¹ For this and other reasons, he rejects the theory of a specific moral faculty, and substitutes a theory of his own, which, however, seems to have gained few adherents.

77. In the place of Butler's conscience and Hutcheson's moral sense, Smith erects an internal monitor, who is the object of much eloquence, and who is generally described as the 'man,' or 'the demigod within the breast—the great judge and arbiter of conduct.'² What, then, is this demigod? Whence his authority, and what his origin? Smith's general reply is that he is formed by sympathy. God has given us the gift, though not in such perfection as might be desired, to see ourselves as others see us. We invent, as it were, an impartial spectator, and approve or disapprove of our conduct as we feel that another man would or would not sympathise with our actions.³ Or, to use an appropriate metaphor, we form a mirror from the opinions of other men, by supposing ourselves the spectators of our own behaviour. 'This is the only looking-glass by which we can in some measure, with the eyes of other people, scrutinise the propriety of our own conduct.'⁴ The theory becomes complex as it is worked out. We have to

¹ Adam Smith, ii 299 *et seq.*; part vii. sec. 4, ch. ii.

² *Ib.* i 127, part vi. sec. 3.

³ *Ib.* i. 226; part iii. ch. i.

⁴ *Ib.* i. 230, *ib.*

take into account not merely the primary but the secondary reflections; and, indeed, we must imagine two opposite mirrors, reflecting images in indefinite succession. We must consider A's sympathy for B, and then B's sympathy with A's sympathy, and then A's own sympathy with B's sympathy with A's sympathy for B, and we are finally rather puzzled to discover the ultimate basis of the sympathy. From some points the doctrine seems to resolve itself into a regard for public opinion as embodied in the hypothetical 'impartial spectators.' But which sympathies are right and which wrong? Where is the ultimate criterion? Impartiality is, doubtless, an essential condition for a sound moral judgment, but can it be the only condition? The standard of morality seems to be too fluctuating to serve any intelligible purpose. We can understand the process by which, according to Smith, the 'amiable virtues' are generated by the spectator's sympathy with the sufferer, and the 'respectable virtues' by the sufferer's sympathy with the spectator's sympathy, and consequent desire to restrain his emotions within moderate bounds.¹ But how are these inconsistent demands to be regulated? How far should the spectator sympathise, and within what bounds should the sufferer restrain his demands for sympathy? The 'man within the breast' is not an incorruptible judge. He may be persuaded to make reports very different from what circumstances would authorise.² Who, then, is to correct his judgments? Man, says Smith, has been constituted a judge of his brethren, and is thus the 'vicegerent upon earth' of his Creator. But he is only judge in the first instance. An appeal lies from him to the higher tribunal of conscience, or, what is identical, to that of the supposed well-informed and impartial spectator, to that of the 'man within the breast, the great judge and arbiter of their' (that is, mankind's) 'conduct.'³ The jurisdiction of the 'man without' is founded in the desire of simple praise; that of the 'man within' in the desire of praiseworthiness. Does, then, the impartial spectator give a final judgment? No; for it seems that this demigod is

¹ Adam Smith, i. 85; part i. sec. 1, ch. v.

² *Ib.* i. 320; part iii. ch. iv.

³ *Ib.* i. 264; part iii. ch. ii. The 'great judge and arbiter of conduct' is a kind of cant phrase with Smith. He appears again, for example, i. 276, and ii. 127.

partly of mortal, though partly of immortal extraction.¹ His judgment is perverted by the clamour of the 'man without.' There lies, therefore, another appeal to a still higher tribunal—that of the 'all-seeing Judge of the world,'² from whom perfect justice may be anticipated in another life, if not in this.

78. But how is the appeal to be made? Smith avoids all reference to supernatural revelation, and we must assume that the decisions of this final and absolute tribunal are to be sought in nature. But on what principle they are to be discovered is nowhere apparent. Smith asserts that, beyond the standard of conduct which is formed from the ordinary opinions of the world, there is a higher standard, slowly framed by the 'demigod,' and approximating indefinitely to the 'archetype of perfection' framed by the Divine artist³—but we seek in vain for any definite account of its nature. The appeal is ultimately made to an inaccessible tribunal, or, in other words, the standard of absolute morality seems to be hopelessly uncertain. It is in heaven, not on earth, and heaven is shrouded in impenetrable mystery. Here, as elsewhere, Smith's copious and rather unctuous eloquence enables him to glide over the real difficulty, quite unconscious of its existence. His ultimate analysis of the sources of approbation is given in his concluding account of 'Systems of Moral Philosophy.' First, he says, we sympathise with the motives of the agent; secondly, with the gratitude of those he has benefited; 'thirdly, we observe that his conduct has been agreeable to the general rules by which those two sympathies generally act; and, last of all, when we consider such actions as making a part of a system of behaviour which tends to promote the happiness either of the individual or of the society, they appear to derive a beauty from this utility, not unlike that which we ascribe to any well-contrived machine.'⁴ And this he asserts to be a complete analysis of the sentiment.

79. The general laws of morality, then, are merely formulæ expressive of the mode in which sympathy habitually acts, and are convenient standards of reference, but not the ultimate foundation of morality.⁵ Utility, again, occupies a strictly subordinate position. Smith rejects Hume's explana-

¹ Adam Smith, i. 266, *ib.*

² *Ib.* i. 267, *ib.*

³ *Ib.* ii. 128; part vi. sec. 3.

⁴ *Ib.* ii. 304, part vii. sec. 4, ch. iii.

⁵ See vol. i. p. 327; part iii. ch. iv.

tion of our sentiments as founded upon it, because we praise a man for other reasons than those which lead us to praise 'chest of drawers;' and because the usefulness of any disposition is not the 'first ground of our approbation.'¹ Utility acts chiefly as facilitating sympathy. We readily fall in with the sentiments which dictate an action plainly useful to mankind, and in this indirect fashion, the utility stimulates, though it does not cause, approbation. 'Many an honest Englishman,' he says, would have been more grieved by the loss of a guinea than by the loss of Minorca; and yet, had it been in his power, would have sacrificed his life a thousand times to defend the fortress.² It is because he naturally sympathises with the nation to whom Minorca was of importance though the utility to him personally may be infinitesimal. Smith, as before, is arguing against the hypothesis that each man acts from calculations of private interest, and does not consider that loyalty and patriotism may have been generated by their obvious utility, though, when developed, their origin passes out of sight.

80. The name of Adam Smith must always be mentioned with high respect; but it cannot be said that as a writer upon ethics he equals his own achievement as a writer upon economics. It may be fully admitted that he shows great ingenuity, and great fertility of illustration, and that he calls attention to a fact which must be taken into account by the moralist. But it is impossible to resist the impression, while we read his fluent rhetoric, and observe his easy acceptance of theological principles already exposed by his master Hume, that we are not listening to a thinker really grappling with a difficult problem, so much as to an ambitious professor who has found an excellent opportunity for displaying his command of language, and making brilliant lectures. The whole tone savours of that complacent optimism of the time which retained theological phrases to round a paragraph, and to save the trouble of genuine thought. Smith's main proposition was hardly original, though he has worked it out in detail, and it is rather calculated to lead us dexterously round difficult questions than to supply us with a genuine answer.

¹ Adam Smith, i. 395; part iv. ch. ii.

² Ib. i. 403; part iv. ch. iii.

81. The moralists, whom I have thus considered, may be regarded as successively developing or modifying the theory originally expounded by Shaftesbury. There is, it is maintained by them all, a certain mysterious harmony or order in the universe which reveals itself to the divine faculty of conscience. With Shaftesbury the faculty is almost identified with the æsthetic perceptions, and is rather a sentiment than a power of intellectual intuition. By his followers the doctrine takes a more formal shape. The sense of harmony is made more definite as a perception of final causes. If we may use the old analogy of the watch, Butler holds that the hand of conscience always points to duty, and that its dictates justify themselves. Hutcheson says that, by a prearranged harmony, the hand of the moral sense points to the course productive of the greatest happiness. Hartley and Adam Smith endeavour to take the watch to pieces and describe the mechanism by which this result is attained. Yet they still hold that the perfection of the contrivance implies a divine artificer. The morality most naturally connects itself with that philosophical Deism which, though it had never much vital power, survived the deist controversy. Except Butler, these writers are all optimists, in regard both to human nature and the universe; they all lay stress upon final causes, and are forced to have recourse to a complex scheme of psychology to account for the assumed intuitions. These doctrines are a logical result from their fundamental conception. God is to them the informing and sustaining Spirit, manifested through the universe and recognised by the human soul. If the universe be thus the external veil of a divine power, everything, including the human mind which recognises it, must be naturally good. Evil is an illusion produced by our imperfect knowledge, or a result of the perverse exercise of that free-will which must be postulated to avoid a lapse into Pantheism. To maintain such a belief, it is necessary to avert one's eyes from the dark side of the world, from evil passions, from hopeless suffering, and to wrap oneself in a cloak of gentle complacency. It is dangerous to ask ultimate questions, or to pry too closely into human motives, in search of their more earthly elements. The origin of our instincts is best left shrouded in mystery, or they must be regarded as a mechanism which testifies to

the design of an all-wise beneficence. If the conscience is the vicegerent of God, the impulse which theologians had placed in the external order is really within us. Yet the impulse still retains the divine attributes of inscrutability and supreme authority.

82. Butler alone retains the belief in human corruption and with him the voice of nature testifies rather to a stern judge than a benevolent father. The universe is, therefore, ruled by a being who excites our dread more unequivocally than our affection. This view indicates the fundamental weakness of the intuitionist system. No one who dares to look facts in the face can be a consistent optimist. Crime and misery are not superficial phenomena to be dismissed as illusory or accidental; they are woven into the very tissue of the world. Men, therefore, who had the strong grasp of palpable facts characteristic of the scientific temperament, preferred to put aside the beautiful but unsubstantial vision of the complacent school. Man is a strange mixture of good and bad, in whom we cannot trace the living image of a perfect Creator. The doctrine of corruption contains an undeniable truth. No plausible theory of final causes will clear up the strange maze of vice and virtue, folly and wisdom, misery and happiness. One thing alone is plain. Man wishes to be happy and dreads to be unhappy. There is the one solid fact, which may guide us through the perplexed labyrinth of good and evil though it cannot explain why good and evil are so strangely blended. Virtue and vice must be resolved into these primitive desires. All *a priori* theories may be rejected as illusory, because all end by declaring facts to be an illusion. The tendency of these moralists was to deny the existence of instincts which they could not explain, as the tendency of their antagonists was to pronounce them inexplicable. Such theories as those of Hartley and Adam Smith opened a kind of *via media*, as suggesting that instincts which appear to be primitive and which have come to be independent, may be ultimately derived from the simpler elements. But, in the earlier stages the general tendency of the empirical school was to dispute the existence of an independent conscience rather than to explain the process by which it was generated.

83. Thus we have an apparently internecine conflict, which

yet admits of a number of intermediate combinations of opinion. Those who retain some independent basis of intuitive knowledge are opposed to those who appeal exclusively to experience; the optimists are opposed to the pessimists; the believers in a general harmony to the believers in a universal corruption; the believers in a system of final causes to those who regard the existing order as a product of a blind struggle of opposing forces; the believers in an inspired conscience to those who resolve all conscience into self-love or prudence; and those who love symmetrical theories more than a definite statement of observed fact to those who prefer fact to theory. Shaftesbury and Mandeville represent the opposite tendencies in their purest shape. Other writers generally put together theories from more or less inconsistent fragments. If we admit that on each side there was a certain element of truth, we may infer that a theory is not necessarily the worse because it did not represent either tendency in its purest shape. The ultimate problem is to discover a moral system independent of the old theology. The natural inclination of the sceptical side was to reject every part of the old morality which seemed to be inseparably connected with theology; but as that theology undoubtedly embodied essential truths, there is much to be said for those who would preserve fragments of the old doctrine, even when they could not accommodate them to a new philosophical basis.

VI. *THE UTILITARIANS.*

84. We must now, however, turn our attention to the moralists who, in later phraseology, have been called utilitarians. Here as elsewhere we may trace the primary impulse to Locke. His attack upon the doctrine of innate ideas brought him into conflict with the intuitional school of morality. The third chapter of the first book of the essay is directed against the ethical application of innate ideas. The argument there stated has served several generations of a utilitarian school; and its cogency within certain limits is irresistible. The theory which he is concerned to overthrow maintains the existence of certain self-evident moral axioms, the truth of which is recognised by all human beings as soon

as they are propounded. The metaphysician regards them as ultimate facts, of which no account can be given, unless he chooses to say that they are divinely implanted in the mind. Nature—the metaphysical God—has directly revealed them to all her creatures. It would seem to follow—though there is room for some dispute upon this point—that these moral axioms, whatever they may be, should be recognised throughout the world, and that the moral code of all nations, though not identical to its furthest ramifications, should at any rate comprise a central core of unvarying truth.

85. Locke may be mistaken in imputing these doctrines to his opponents, but his answer is interesting inasmuch as it involves the germinal principles of the various utilitarian schools. The first doctrine which he avows is common to them all. He declares that he can find no ‘innate practical principles,’ except ‘a desire of happiness and an aversion to misery;’¹ and these are appetites, not intellectual intuitions. ‘Good or evil,’ as he says in a later chapter, ‘are nothing but pleasure and pain, or that which occasions pleasure or pain to us.’² The one universal motive being a desire for happiness, the moral impulses must be in some way resolvable into it. An ultimate appeal, as we may say, lies to this principle from every other. There is no moral rule, urges Locke, of which we may not ask the reason, and therefore none can be innate. The rule, for example, of doing as we would be done by is susceptible of proof, and a man to whom it was proposed for the first time might fairly ask that its reasonableness should be made plain to him.³ Virtue is approved because visibly conducive to happiness, and conscience is merely our opinion of the conformity of actions to certain moral rules, the utility of which has been proved by experience. It is no mysterious judge laying down absolute decisions for inscrutable reasons.

86. This, the fundamental doctrine of Locke and of all his disciples, is in fact a first form of the primary axiom, upon which depends the possibility of reducing morality within the sphere of scientific observation. It asserts that our moral

¹ Locke's Essay, book i. ch. iii. sec. 3.

² Ib. book i. ch. ii. sec. 4.

³ Ib. book ii. ch. xxviii. sec. 5.

sentiments have no inscrutable or exceptional character. Its essence consists in banishing mystery from the origin of our moral instincts. If it too easily degenerated into an assertion of the absolute selfishness of human nature, the assertion that the moral sense is derivative was a necessary preliminary to all fruitful investigation of the phenomena.

87. The doctrine, scientific in spirit if crude in form, is supported by the scientific method of an appeal to experience. Locke insists upon the variability of the moral standard in different races and ages. The 'Tououpinambos,' for example, thought that they would merit paradise by revenge, and by eating their enemies. 'They have not so much as a name for God, and have no religion and no worship,'¹ and these peculiarities of the Tououpinambos may be paralleled by equally strange aberrations of the moral instinct in other races. Now, though a special breach of the law may be no proof that it is unknown, a general permission to break it is a proof that it is not innate. The very recognition of any duty implies the presence in the mind of ideas of God, law, obligation, punishment, and a future life; and these ideas, so far from being universal, are not always clear and distinct, even in 'thinking and studious men.'² The vast diversity of opinion which exists would be impossible if threats of Almighty vengeance were stamped in indelible characters upon the minds of all men; nor can anyone, in fact, tell us what are these 'innate practical principles' which are yet asserted to be so palpably evident. Lord Herbert's five principles, for example, are illusory. To say that repentance for sin is a duty is idle, unless you are agreed as to the particular actions which are sinful. And the attempt to evade the appeal to experience by arguing that the innate principles are dulled by education and custom is really a mode of begging the question. The argument comes simply to this; 'the principles which all men allow for true are innate; those that men of right reason admit are the principles allowed by all mankind; we, and those of our mind, are men of reason; wherefore, we agreeing, our principles are innate—which is a very pretty way of arguing and a short cut to infallibility.'³ The real fact

¹ Locke's Essay, book i. ch. iii. sec. 9

² *Ib.* sec. 12.

³ *Ib.* sec. 20.

is, that men, having taken up many principles on trust, and having entirely forgotten whence they came, assume them to be divinely implanted axioms; and thus 'doctrines that have been derived from no better original than the superstition of a nurse and the authority of an old woman may, by length of time and consent of neighbours, grow up to the dignity of principles in morality and religion.'¹

88. Locke brings down his logical sledgehammer on the principles of his antagonist with masculine vigour. If his objections were crudely stated, the dogmas which he smashes were at least equally crude. But it must be granted that he has left little behind him but ruins. We ask, in some alarm, what then is morality? The conscience as a mysterious and independent guide is annihilated; the only motive left is self-interest; and it almost seems as if the Tououpinambos had about as much to say for themselves as the English or the Jews. Mandeville, indeed, in his denial of the real existence of virtue has simply carried Locke's method one step further. Assume that the standard of virtue is so variable that no particular duty can be singled out as universally binding and recognised, and it is easy to infer that virtue is a mere sham.

89. No conclusion, of course, could be more repulsive to Locke himself, and it is curious that he did not perceive the application which might be made of his doctrines. Bending his whole energy to destroy the belief in the autocratic and irresponsible character of conscience, he never thinks of supplying its place. Apparently the need of reconstruction scarcely occurred to him. He speaks of the 'eternal and unalterable nature of right and wrong,'² and he asserts emphatically that 'morality is capable of demonstration as well as mathematics.'³ If ethics are mathematically demonstrable, it must be possible to form a code applicable alike to Tououpinambos and Englishmen, or, at least, to assign some fixed principles from which the varying codes might be constructed. Locke would partly answer by referring to the will of God. The discussion is given in the twenty-eighth chapter of his second book,

¹ Locke, book i. ch. iii. sec. 22.

² Book ii. ch. xxviii., note to sec. 11.

³ Ib. book iii. ch. xi. sec. 16; book iv. ch. iv. sec. 7; book iv. ch. xii. sec. 8; and see 'Reasonableness of Christianity,' Works, vi. 146.

under the head of 'Moral Relations.' He there defines moral good and evil to be the conformity to 'some law,' whereby good and evil are drawn upon us by the will and power of the lawmaker.¹ We are subject to three kinds of laws, the law of God, the civil law, and the 'law of opinion or reputation.'² The law of God is enforced by the pains and penalties of the next world. Nobody can take us out of his hands. His will 'is the only true touchstone of moral rectitude; and by comparing them to his law it is that men judge of the most considerable moral good or evil of their actions; that is, whether as duties or sins they are likely to procure them happiness or misery from the hands of the Almighty.'³ The civil law determines men's criminality or innocence, and the 'philosophical law,' or law of opinion, varying widely in different countries, determines their virtue or vice. This, though wanting in precision, is the law by which men most frequently govern themselves; for its sanctions, vaguer than those of other laws, are more continually present to the imagination than those of the divine law, and less easily evaded than those of the civil law. These various laws may, of course, conflict as in the case of duelling, which is a sin tried by the law of God, a virtuous action by the 'law of fashion'—another synonym for the law of opinion—and a capital crime according to the civil law of some countries.⁴

90. The law of God, then, is the only permanent and invariable standard; for the other laws vary—and, so far as Locke expounds his theory, vary indefinitely according to time, place, and circumstance. The law of God, too, must override the other laws in case of conflict; or, in his own language, be 'the only true touchstone of moral rectitude.' How, then, is the all-important question, can this law be discovered? If God's will be concealed in impenetrable mystery, virtue would apparently become a mere arbitrary fashion. That is Mandeville's solution. If the divine will be discoverable only by revelation, Locke's theory coincides with that of the theological utilitarians. The motive is with him, as with Paley, the dread of hell and the hope of heaven. He tells us himself that the Gospel gives an absolutely pure code of mo-

¹ Locke, book ii ch. xxviii, sec 5.

² *Ib.* sec. 7.

³ *Ib.* sec. 8.

⁴ *Ib.* sec. 15.

reality, and for that reason he excuses himself to Molyneux for not undertaking to write a treatise on the subject.¹ Locke, however, would not have admitted that our knowledge of morality was dependent on revelation. In fact, the whole argument of the treatise on the 'Reasonableness of Christianity' implies that the heathen philosophers could discover a system approximating very closely to that directly promulgated from heaven. How, then, could they arrive at a knowledge of the divine law? What was the criterion by which they were to distinguish between moral good and evil?

91. The curious vacillation which runs through Locke's reasoning upon morality, and which thus makes moral truth alternately quite uncertain and mathematically demonstrable, is but one instance of the general inconsistency in his theory of reality. According to Locke, as I have elsewhere observed, our knowledge of the external world cannot be 'scientific.' We can only know phenomena, and know that they do not correspond (except in the case of the 'primary' qualities) to the objective facts beneath them. Certainty is attained only by comparison of ideas. We may know them adequately, for they exist entirely in our minds. Hence we may obtain certainty in mathematics; we have only to compare our ideas in order to discover geometrical relations, and we know (it matters not how) that those ideas are the counterparts of external realities. The same, according to Locke, may be said of moral relations. Though he expresses himself very indistinctly, his notion seems to be that in moral questions we are reasoning about certain things of which we know 'the precise real essence,' because they are entirely 'ideas in the mind.'² Thus, for example, we might compare our idea of justice with our idea of stealing, and observe that they did not correspond; whence the truth that stealing is unjust may be proved with the same certainty as the truth that three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles. The obvious difficulty is, that this doctrine seems to make morality certain in the sense in which a verbal proposition is certain, and in that sense alone. We are merely unfolding our definition, or explaining that what we call just does not include what we call stealing.

¹ See letter to Molyneux of March 30, 1696.

² Locke's Essay, book iii. ch. xi. secs. 16 and 17.

This remark was made by Berkeley. 'To demonstrate morality,' he says, in his commonplace book, 'it seems one need only make a discovery of words and see which included which. . . . Locke's instances of demonstration in morality are, according to his own rule, trifling propositions.'¹ Locke, it is clear, never distinctly realised his own position, and whatever escape he might have attempted, it is plain that no such process as he contemplates could be reconciled with his general utilitarianism. The certainty which he would attain is not a certainty as to the tendency of actions to produce happiness. Any such theory must involve an objective element, and, on Locke's general theory, cannot be part of scientific knowledge. Here, as in the whole philosophy of which it forms a part, Locke's teaching is palpably inconsistent, and the attempt to deduce a coherent doctrine would be waste of labour.

92. Berkeley's moral theory is not sufficiently prominent to require investigation. The next great theorist of Locke's school was Hume, and Hume preferred his moral treatise to all his other writings. The reason for this preference, so far as one ever can discover an author's motives for self-judgment, will be tolerably plain. Here, we may say, Hume has, at least, some excuse for saying that he has obtained a definite constructive result. When Hume gave a second version of his metaphysics and psychology in the *Essays*, he mangled the earlier 'Treatise of Human Nature' with singular want of parental affection. Part is rewritten, and much is altogether omitted. The later version of his ethics contained in the 'Enquiry' bears a different relation to the ethics of the treatise. All the essential principles reappear, though some points are more lightly touched; but they reappear in a substantially new exposition. The literary texture of the 'Enquiry' shows everywhere the magic touch of Hume's lucid intellect. Morality, perplexed or mysterious with most of his predecessors, becomes admirably simple. All the doctrines fall into their place spontaneously. One obvious principle solves all doubts. The very lucidity may appear suspicious to many thinkers; but all must admit that the essential doctrines of utilitarianism are stated by Hume with a clearness

¹ Berkeley, Works, iv. 449.

and consistency not to be found in any other writer of the century. From Hume to J. S. Mill, the doctrine received no substantial alteration. It was Hume's aim to state the principles of morality in such a way as to bring it entirely within the domain of science. Granting the truth of his theories he succeeded admirably. 'The only object of reasoning,' he says (that is, of ethical reasoning), 'is to discover the circumstances on both sides which are common to these' (the estimable or blamable) 'qualities, to observe that particular in which the estimable qualities agree on the one hand, and the blamable on the other; and thence to reach the foundation of ethics, and find those universal principles from which all censure or approbation is ultimately derived. As this is a question of fact, not of abstract science, we can only expect success by following the experimental method, and deducing general maxims from a comparison of particular instances.' The science of morality, then, is to be based on experience. Hume succeeded so far as he definitely and systematically admitted this appeal. He failed in so far as, from his standing-point, it was impossible to form an adequate conception of the method by which the appeal should be made.

93. This method of approaching the problem implies the dismissal of all ontological and teleological speculation. Clarke's method of deducing morality from the intuitions of pure reason must be abandoned along with Butler's method of discovering morality by divining the purposes of the Creator. Hume's objections to the first method are radical. Reason by itself cannot prompt us to act. It can make us aware that an object which excites our passions does or does not exist, or it can show that the means by which we would gratify our passions are or are not adequate. But it is not by itself a motive. 'Tis not contrary to reason,' he says, 'to prefer the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger. 'Tis not contrary to reason for me to choose my total ruin to prevent the least uneasiness of an Indian or person totally unknown to me.'³ Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as a combat between reason and passion

¹ Hume's Works, iv. 174.

² 'Treatise of Human Nature,' book ii. part iii. sec. 3; book iii. part iii. sec. 1. appendix i. to 'Enquiry.'

³ Works, ii. 195.

'Reason is and ought only to be the slave of the passions, and can never pretend to any other office than to serve and obey them.'¹ The phraseology is wantonly paradoxical in sound, because in his early treatise Hume aimed at being paradoxical. But it expresses the view which would be taken in sober seriousness by all scientific reasoners. The reason is the faculty which enables us to frame a mental picture of the world corresponding to the external reality. It would show that the total suffering caused by the destruction of the world was greater than the suffering caused by scratching my finger. But unless I were benevolent enough to feel for others, the bare fact would not impel me to scratch my finger to save the world, any more than the knowledge that a guinea was worth one-and-twenty shillings would make me prefer a guinea to a shilling if I had no love of money. If I were malevolent instead of benevolent, it might have the contrary effect. Hence all the reasonings of Clarke's school about the eternal and inherent essences of things are thrown away. If sound, they might reveal to us certain truths, but the mode in which those truths affected us would still be a question of experience. These moralists fill the gap in their system, as Hume points out,² by suddenly substituting for the copula 'is' or 'is not' the copula 'ought' or 'ought not.' The reason may regulate and guide the passions by enabling us to compare their objects. It cannot supply the place of the passions.

94. The distinction thus drawn between the reason and the passions raises the most difficult of psychological problems. The connection between the emotions and the intellect is indefinitely intricate. Every mental process has its emotional and its intellectual element.³ It is impossible, therefore, to describe the fully developed structure of the mind without taking into account a whole series of complex actions and reactions between the two factors. And, for this reason, Hume's psychology set forth in the second book of the *Treatise*, is the least satisfactory part of his work, as it was that which was most ruthlessly cut down in the *Essays*. Only a mangled remnant reappears as the brief '*Treatise on the Passions*,' and ends

¹ Hume's Works, ii. 195.

² *Ib.* 245.

³ Hume partly recognises the truth in the section '*Malice and Envy*' of the *Treatise*, ii. 159.

abruptly with a half apology. Hume's attempt, indeed, was hopeless. The older philosophy had resolved feeling into beliefs. The passion, pride, for example, was identified with the conviction 'I am better than my neighbours'. Hume at once accepts a classification founded on this conception, and tries to get rid of the intellectual element implied. The attempt is contradictory. Pride, if pride be an elementary passion, must imply, at least, the intellectual processes necessary to frame some consciousness of myself and my neighbours. Hume's effort to evade this conclusion is, at best, a display of wasted ingenuity. Human nature is compounded of too many elements, too intricately blended, for any offhand guesses of the cleverest philosopher to be of much value.

95. But the fact that Hume was not, and could not be, a scientific psychologist, does not destroy the value of his critical assault upon the ontologists. To confute the school of Clarke little more was required than to show that ethics was not a branch of pure mathematics; for the truth and reality which they ascribed to morality were, on their showing, to be found in the mathematical world alone. Hume's criticism has a wide application. Morality, he says, in substance, cannot be deduced from absolute *a priori* truths, for it includes an empirical element. This follows from the fact that, if two men (or two races) shared the same intellectual convictions, the action which resulted would vary according to their emotional compositions. The same truths which to the angelical nature would supply a motive for doing good, would supply to the diabolical nature a motive for doing evil. Hume, for this reason, compares the moral aspects of an action to the 'secondary' qualities.¹ An action is seen as coloured by our emotions as the external world is known, and can only be known, as it affects our senses. From the point of view of the earlier philosophy, this was to admit the unreality of vice and virtue, or, in a different phraseology, it would prove vice and virtue to be 'subjective.'

96. Hume's view of the passions as entirely independent of the intellect, and associated with certain objects by a tie in some sense arbitrary, as indeed every causal tie is with

¹ Hume's Works, ii. 245.

Hume arbitrary, might seem to sanction this conclusion. If our likes and dislikes might be indefinitely altered or inverted, there could be no science of human conduct. In fact, however, Hume's aim is precisely to discover such a science, but to prove simultaneously that it must be a science of observation. The passions, he says, form a 'regular mechanism,' which is as susceptible of scientific investigation as any branch of natural philosophy.¹ Thus his argument virtually comes to the statement that a scientific morality would imply a psychology, and that psychology must be based upon experience alone. The relation is the same as that between sanitary and physiological science. The laws of moral as of physical health depend upon the structure of the organism, and the nature of that structure is only discoverable through the ordinary methods of scientific investigation. In this sense morality must include an empirical element, unless it be maintained that an *a priori* deduction of psychology is possible. The assumption of the possibility, to say nothing of the actual performance of such a deduction, depends upon the resolution of the passions into intellectual perceptions. If the passions are in some sense reason, there is some plausibility in attempting to frame an *a priori* scheme of psychological truths parallel to the so-called *a priori* scheme of mathematical truths. In that case, again, and in that case alone, morality would be in a sense capable of *a priori* deduction. We could not, indeed, even in that case, justify the identification of virtue and vice with truth and falsehood, or reason and error, implied in Clarke's substitution of 'ought' for 'is,' for that would be to show that bad actions were impossible as well as unusual, or to identify moral with scientific laws. But we might show that certain actions had always certain qualities or tendencies, which justified the moral distinction. That is to say, we might find an *a priori* justification for the utilitarian or 'moral sense' theories.

97. Meanwhile Hume is justified in declaring that morality must be based on experience if psychology be based on experience. We should amend his statement by adding that a complete science of morality would imply a science of sociology as well as of psychology, and requires a wider

¹ Last sentence of 'Treatise on the Passions.'

and more systematic interrogation of experience than I had fully contemplated. There must be not only an empirical, but a variable, element in morality; and this is enough to condemn the hypothesis of Clarke. A scheme of morality deduced from self-evident and necessary truths must produce a code as rigid as its fundamental axioms, and, therefore, incapable of varying with the development of the race. Morality, on the other hand, includes in its primary data an element which varies, though, of course, varies according to definite laws. It must, therefore, give rules varying as the subject-matter varies; just as sanitary science gives one set of rules for men and another for beasts, and prescribes different conduct to a negro and a European. Hume did not fully appreciate this view, because, accepting from the ontologists the doctrine that human nature is always the same, he contemplated only a variation of external circumstance. As he, like all his contemporaries, failed to make allowance for the slow evolution of new social and intellectual conditions, the observed inconsistencies of the ethical code seemed to imply an almost indefinite variability of the moral sense.

98. If this be the true view of the relation between ethics on the one hand, and the sciences of psychology and sociology on the other, and if again, as is perfectly clear, if scientific psychology or sociology existed (even if they now exist) till long after the foundation of morality, one of two results must follow. Either the moral law is revealed by an instinct or inspired faculty, which can act independent of reason, or morality must be an empirical science; that is to say, it must have been discovered like other truths—by a series of experiments. As sanitary rules preceded physiology, ethical rules have preceded psychology. Was the moral law known by revelation, or by a special faculty, or was it explicable by some admitted and normal faculties of human nature? Hume's object is to answer this question by showing the possibility of the last alternative. The ground was already prepared. Hutcheson, with whom Hume corresponded, had accepted the utilitarian criterion of morality, and he had been in great measure anticipated by Cumberland, who had propounded this view, as against Hobbes, in 1672. The only necessary step was to get rid of the teleological view, and

to represent this tendency to produce happiness, not as a case of preordained harmony, but as a simple case of cause and effect. Those actions are good, said Hume, which are useful, and are good because and in so far as they are useful, not useful because they are good. The inversion was very simple, but so fruitful as to justify the complacency with which Hume concludes the enquiry. His doctrine seems to him so obvious, that it must have been long ago accepted, were there not some hidden objection to it. It explains the various puzzles which had led some to reject morality, and others to regard it as a mystery. Locke and Mandeville, for example, had insisted upon the variability of the moral standard in different ages and countries. Locke cuts the knot by introducing the divine law; Mandeville accepts the conclusion that the taste for chastity is as arbitrary as the taste for big buttons. Hume considers the same problem in the Dialogue which follows the 'Enquiry.' After pointing out with ingenious exaggeration the difference between the standard accepted in ancient Greece, in France, and in England, he asks how any fixed standard is discoverable? The answer is simple. 'By tracing matters a little higher, and examining the first principles which each nation establishes of blame and censure. The Rhine flows north, the Rhône south, yet both spring from the *same* mountain, and are also actuated in their opposite directions by the *same* principle of gravity.'¹ Utility is the moral force of gravitation. Qualities are admired as useful or agreeable. The many qualities admired by Greeks and Frenchmen were admired because useful both in Athens and Paris: the qualities approved by one nation and condemned by the other were differently judged, because the different circumstances of distant regions and periods made qualities valuable in one country which were prejudicial in the other. The military virtues are more admired because more essential in times of disorder than in times of peace; and customs, such as those which determine the relations between the sexes, will lead to corresponding varieties of moral sentiment.

99. The 'Enquiry' is devoted to an analysis of the moral qualities, with the object of showing that, in every case,

¹ Hume's Works, iv. 297.

approbation follows the useful or the agreeable qualities—the meaning of ‘useful’ and ‘agreeable,’ it must be noticed, being assumed instead of defined. Happiness ceases to be the reward of virtue, except in the sense in which the end is the reward of the means. The mysterious element vanishes. With Adam Smith our respect for wealth is a divinely implanted instinct; with Hume it is the natural effect of association and sympathy.¹ So, with Butler, resentment is ‘weapon put into our hands by nature against injury, injustice and cruelty,’ and justified because human nature, ‘considered as the divine workmanship, should be considered sacred; for in the image of God made he man.’² With Hume, resentment would be simply a form of self-love, justified so far as conducive to happiness. Butler tells us that nature has caused us to disapprove falsehood, injustice, and cruelty more distinctly than folly and imprudence, because the punishment follows the fault more obviously in the latter case, and therefore additional punishment would be superfluous.³ Hume would transfer the reason from ‘nature’ to man. Superfluous suffering being an evil, superfluous punishment is necessarily immoral. This change in the point of view is equivalent to that which takes place in science when the fins of a fish are regarded as developed by the conditions of life, instead of as proofs of intelligent design. Their utility is equally obvious to all observers. The interpretation may be teleological or scientific.

100. The explanation given by Hume may be admitted in the case of the qualities immediately profitable to the individual; but how does it come to pass that we admire qualities such as justice, which are profitable to our neighbours? It seems natural that we should be grateful to the benefactor who has supplied our wants; but why do we respect the judge who may punish our faults? The difference corresponds to a distinction which occupies a prominent place in the third book of the *Treatise* between the ‘natural’ and the ‘artificial’ virtues. Hume argues, in sufficient correspondence with modern methods of enquiry, that the artificial virtues, of which justice is the great type, take their origin in the gradual developme

¹ Hume’s Works, iv. 228.

² Sermon viii.

³ ‘Dissertation on Nature of Virtue.’

of society, which is not, as earlier writers had supposed, based upon a contract, but which gradually generates a common understanding which may be compared to a contract. Men feel the necessity of living in society, common rules are essential to the social life, and their real or supposed utility is in all cases the cause of their adoption. The necessity of having some rule induces lawyers to catch at the most superficial analogies in order to justify particular modes of distributing property,¹ and these analogies are then represented as implying some metaphysical reason; but in all cases the ultimate ground of justice is simply the convenience of the society. The reasonings, again, by which we may prove the utility of certain arrangements, may appear to be too complex to have actually operated upon mankind; but they are worked out by the experience of the race. 'Speculative reasonings,' he says, in speaking of the theories of chastity, 'which cost so much pains to philosophers, are often formed by the world naturally and without reflection,'² and he proceeds to show how in this case a public opinion has been formed by the sense of immediate utility in persons directly interested. Though his doctrine, in short, is imperfect, Hume has a general conception of the method by which general rules may be blindly worked out through the conflict of opposing passions and the co-operation of common interests. Men, forced to live together, under fixed conditions, with limited means, have framed certain conventions under the mingled influences of sympathy and selfishness.³

101. The distinction of virtues into 'natural' and 'artificial' was calculated to give offence, as perhaps it was meant to excite attention, by the apparent implication that 'artificial' virtues were in some sense unreal. Hume, however, is careful to state distinctly that 'artificial' does not mean 'arbitrary.'⁴ The laws of justice may even be called 'laws of nature,' meaning that they result from the qualities belonging to the species. 'Natural,' as he says in the 'Enquiry,' is taken in so many meanings that its application to justice may or may not be proper. 'If self-love, if benevolence, be natural to man; if reason and forethought be also natural, then may the same

¹ Works, ii. 279

² See Treatise, part ii. sec. 2; ii. 258, &c.

³ Ib. p. 332.

⁴ Ib. p. 258.

epithet be applied to justice, order, fidelity, property, society.' His meaning is, in short, that these virtues are derivative, not primary; that they result from the operation of certain primary instincts working under given conditions; and are therefore as natural a product as any other qualities, though not due to the immediate teaching of a supernatural instinct or derivable from *a priori* reasoning.

102. The doctrine thus stated contains the germs of all later moral speculation which acknowledges the derivative character of morality. It expresses as accurately as the state of enquiry would admit the mode in which we must suppose the moral standard to have been actually formed. Moreover it contains statements which, when their bearing is fully considered, may serve to correct some characteristic failings of the earlier utilitarians. If the process of building up moral sense be such as Hume has indicated, it is obvious that instincts, for which it is difficult to assign any tangible reason may yet deserve the highest respect. Men in past times felt the advantage of certain rules before they could prove their utility. That body of traditional prejudice or instinctive sentiment which is still the sole guide for most men should be treated with respect by philosophers as being, possibly at least, reason in the making. It represents a mass of inherited experience, which may, it is true, correspond to extinct needs but which may also represent permanent and valuable truths. Utilitarians who were anxious to obtain a definite and tangible test generally treated such sentiment with simple contempt, especially if allied with the old theology. Hume, as we have seen, admits the value of rules which are designed for the protection of chastity, and explains how the experience of the race has felt out truths which a speculative philosopher could hardly have discovered by meditation. And yet Hume like most of his contemporaries, speaks rather slightly of the virtue, partly from undervaluing the importance of the very process, and partly because theologians had connected the doctrine of chastity with a narrow asceticism. A more curious, though less important, case is considered in the remarkable posthumous Essay on Suicide. Hume shows, with his usual acuteness, the futility of the reasoning by which it

¹ See Treatise, iv. 275.

generally condemned, and having exploded the theological objections, shows easily that suicide may frequently produce a balance of happiness. Why, then, should life be preserved when life means hopeless agony? This is one of the points upon which it is probable that some revision of existing morality is desirable. But a competent enquirer at the present day would see a class of difficulties which Hume ignores. He would have to trace out the true philosophy of the modern aversion to suicide, and to discover whether it is rooted in some exploded theological doctrine, or whether it may not be closely connected with sentiments of the sanctity of life with which it is dangerous to tamper. For the direct application of the test of utility he would have to substitute a more refined method of enquiry, recognising the principle of the complex correlations between the growth of particular sentiments, the social order, and the intellectual conceptions of the race. In other words, utilitarian calculations of the good and evil produced to the individual or to his neighbours would have to be supplemented by a careful consideration of the laws of growth of the social organism.

103. The full meaning of this criticism will appear more fully in considering a further characteristic of Hume's moral system. It is often said, as against utilitarians, that the happiness of which they speak is too vague a term to supply a sufficient criterion of morality. To this it may be replied that the moralists who argue—and what moralists do not argue?—that virtue produces happiness must understand the term distinctly enough to allow some meaning to the definition that actions which produce happiness are virtuous. It may be replied, again, that, whatever latitude is allowed to the word, the great moral rules may all be established by this mode of reasoning. Nobody can doubt that justice, benevolence, and temperance do in fact make the race happier in any admissible sense of happiness. The utilitarian, indeed, is forced to start from the postulate that there is a certain agreement as to what constitutes happiness in any society which has a common moral code. If so fundamental a difference existed that the pleasures of half the race were the pains of the other, there would be a moral anarchy, and one half would be sooner or later converted or extirpated. But the

criticism points to a real difficulty. According to the ordinary assumption of the utilitarian, conduct can only be compared in respect of the happiness which it produces. Equal 'lots' of pleasure (in Bentham's phrase) are equally desirable from whatever source they spring. Intellectual and sensual pleasures, the pleasures of love or of hatred, are to be counted as equal if equally intense. We are to measure the quantity, not the quality, of pleasure in forming our criterion. This doctrine is implicitly accepted by Hume, and colours his moral doctrine. The conscience, supreme with Butler, is with him no distinct faculty at all. The moral sense of which he speaks appears in the 'Enquiry' to be identified by humanity or sympathy.¹ In an appendix, 'On some Verbal Disputes,' he treats the distinction between the virtues and the talents as trifling or illusory. Why, he asks, should we discriminate between the social virtues and such endowments as 'sense and courage, temperance and industry, wisdom and knowledge' ?² The corresponding sentiment may be 'somewhat different,' but not different enough to justify a different classification. He approves 'the definition of the elegant and judicious poet'—³

Virtue (for mere goodnature is a fool)
Is sense and spirit with humanity—

and he significantly ascribes the origin of the distinction to the connection between ethics and theology, which has warped reason and even language from its natural course, and by seizing the false analogy between civil and moral laws, has made the whole system turn on the unphilosophical and irrelevant distinction between voluntary and involuntary.⁴

104. The absence of that deep feeling which Butler associates with the word conscience ; the want of sympathy with the emotions of remorse, and of that peculiar horror of sin which expresses itself in Christian morality, renders Hume's teaching greatly inferior to Butler's in practical force, far superior as it is in philosophical coherence. This superficiality of sentiment is to be traced partly to Hume's personal temperament, inclined to a quiet philosophical scepticism, and apt to look

¹ Hume's Works, iv. 219.

² Armstrong, 'The Art of Preserving Health.'

³ *Ib.* 282.

⁴ Hume, iv. 287.

with indifference upon the more passionate emotions of imaginative minds, and illustrated in another direction by his preference of Racine to Shakespeare; and partly to the general temper of the age, and especially of the freethinkers of the age. The revolt from theology had blinded men to the deeper meanings veiled in theological teaching; and led to a contemptuous estimate of the great moving forces which had uttered themselves in theological language as mere fanaticism, 'enthusiasm,' and superstition. But the tendency is also logically connected with Hume's philosophical position.

105. How, in fact, are we to frame our moral calculus? How are we to estimate the tendency of any action on happiness or unhappiness? Since we have no divine faculty to pronounce one kind of happiness to be better than another, let us assume all to be equal. In the same way, let us assume that, as Bentham says, each man is to count for one, and no man for two. Unless our units are assumed to be equal, we obviously cannot count to any purpose. But, however convenient the assumption, we may ask how it can be justified on empirical principles, and whether it does not lead us to practical difficulties? Why should the happiness of a Goethe or a Shakespeare be considered as of equal value with the happiness of a pickpocket? If all men's happiness is to be of equal value, does it not follow that we must accept the standard of the lowest, because the most numerous, class, and endeavour to promote those pleasures which they most appreciate? One man prefers art to gin; a thousand prefer gin to art. Why is the intellectual to be preferred to the sensual gratification? Because, it has been said, those who can appreciate both generally or always prefer the intellectual. But may that not imply merely that the power of gratifying the palate is lost as the power of gratifying the mental faculties increases? Can we obtain a sufficiently secure standing-point for asserting the value of the purest and what are generally called the highest pleasures? So long as we start simply from observation of the individual mind, and allow each testimony to be of equal value, there seems to be no sufficient escape from these difficulties. What is called morality becomes simply the judgment of the average mind as to the relative value of its pleasures. There must always be a tendency in

thinkers of this class to regard the heroic few as fools, and men of lofty moral aspirations as mere dreamers.

106. The difficulty, indeed, is not so fatal as has been sometimes asserted. Human nature is so far uniform, and, therefore, estimates of happiness so far alike, that we can deduce the ordinary rules of morality without much practical difficulty. The great moral commonplaces hold good upon any assumption; and in morality we have not got far beyond commonplace. It must be admitted, however, that this uncertainty as to the meaning of the fundamental conception leaves an apparently arbitrary assumption at the very base of the proposed science; and, moreover, tends to lower the resulting type of morality. In the proposed calculation, the most tangible pleasures are likely to be rated above their value, and the standard of happiness prevalent amongst the majority of the race will be taken as determining the standard of morality. Morality becomes the art by which men obtain the greatest amount of gratification without attending to its quality.

107. How, then, are we to escape this uncertainty without attempting the impracticable task of an *a priori* deduction of morality? To give a satisfactory reply would be to indicate the true weakness, not only of Hume, but of his most distinguished disciples. A scientific morality, as I have said, would imply not only a psychology, but a sociology. To understand the conditions of human welfare, we must understand the laws of growth and equilibrium, both of the individual and the race. We must acquire a conception of society as a complex organism, not a mere aggregate of individuals in arbitrary or indefinitely variable combination; and, therefore, regulated and developed by processes not discoverable by simple inspection of the constituent atoms. If the laws which express those processes could be accurately stated, we should have, if not an actual moral code, the necessary basis for a moral code. Morality, according to the analogy already suggested, is to sociology what a sanitary code is to physiology; and the analogy may help us a step further. It must be defined as the art of attaining social health, not as the art of attaining the maximum of happiness, although we may admit that the two ends are ultimately identical. But is it not as necessary to have a definition of health in this case

as of happiness in the other? The answer is suggested by the analogy. A physician does not start from defining health, but he aims at discovering the laws in virtue of which an organism preserves its equilibrium, and develops the greatest amount of strength, activity, and sensibility. He assumes that such an organism will enjoy greater happiness than one which does not conform to the rules laid down. If, instead of pursuing this method, he had made the attainment of pleasure at once the ultimate and immediate end, he would have arrived at different conclusions. The man, he would have said, is the happiest who gets the greatest amount of pleasures from his palate, his senses of hearing, touching, and so forth. But how from such a test could he deduce the right rule of life? How could he determine whether the ear was a worthier organ than the eye, or what amount of energy should be devoted to each mode of gratification? Some obvious rules of temperance or the like might be discovered; but he would be obviously in want of some method for bringing the conflicting series of observations into unity, and, so to speak, gathering the various indications to a focus. That want is supplied by the laws of organic unity. The ultimate criterion is the tendency of a given rule of life to maintain the organism in the highest degree of vigour. The various modes of enjoyment are correlated by the tendency to preserve or destroy the equilibrium of the body; and a precisely analogous place is filled in ethical speculation by the study of the social organism.

108. A scientific sociology would bring the various estimates of happiness to a single focus. An individual may prefer sensual to intellectual gratification, but if it were proved that a rule which encouraged sensuality at the expense of the intellect tended to the decay of the social body, that it lowered its vitality, destroyed its equilibrium, and ultimately diminished even its powers of sensual gratification, he must either admit that the rule was a bad one, or declare that he preferred his own taste to the welfare of society. The existence of a certain social passion is undoubtedly necessary for the existence of society or of morality; but if its existence be once assumed, the moral question might be brought by sociology to a single test. Such and such rules tend, it would be

shown, to the permanent vitality of society ; everybody, then, must approve them who wishes well to society. This is the ultimate postulate of derivative morality, and one with which it is impossible to dispense. But if sociology were once constituted, it would supply a single and decisive test instead of the vague and complex calculus suggested by the cruder forms of utilitarianism, or what is called the greatest happiness principle.

109. Now, as we have already seen in speaking of Hume's philosophy, and as we shall hereafter see in treating of his political speculations, this conception of a social organism was just what was wanting to him. His scepticism reduced society to a mass of atoms, capable of being cast into any mould, and producing any set of results. A crude empiricism replaced a true experiential philosophy. Any cause might be joined to any effect ; and, therefore, the tendency of actions to produce happiness, or, as he vaguely says, the fact that they are 'useful' or 'agreeable'—words never defined nor distinguished—could not be scientifically estimated. We must know how the organs are combined into a whole, as well as observe what amount of pleasure they produce ; and the combination seemed to Hume to be more or less arbitrary. The expression of his theories in terms of social philosophy is individualism, and no scientific views can be reached when all methods of observation start from the individual, instead of taking into account the whole of which he forms a constituent part. One of the most important, for example, of moral questions is that which concerns the relations of the sexes ; and a marked peculiarity of the school descended from Hume is its tendency to tamper with the moral code by which those relations are regulated. The case is significant in many ways. The only method by which the utilitarian can approach the subject is by endeavouring to reckon the good and evil produced in individual cases. Here the indelibility of the marriage law inflicts a hardship ; there it prevents a cruelty. We must strike an average as best we may of the good and ill effects, and condemn or approve the law accordingly. The old theological sanction implies a superstitious view, and may, therefore, be set aside altogether. Every law inflicts some evil, because it forbids some gratification, and therefore the

presumption is always against law.¹ The scientific sociologist would have to take into account a series of observations to which the utilitarian is apt to be altogether blind. He would observe, perhaps, that the family is the primary germ of all society; that, in proportion as its sanctity has been maintained, society has been in a healthy and vigorous condition; that men in all ages have felt the necessity of regulating the strongest instinct of our nature, so as to bring it upon the side of the social, instead of the anti-social, tendencies; that the theological sanction, however superstitious in form, is the expression of the experience of many ages, blindly feeling its way to promote the welfare of the race, and preserving those races in which it has been allowed to operate with sufficient strength; that, therefore, the presumption is in favour of the social regulations in which it is embodied, however its form may be obsolete; and thus, that if any remedy is required for existing grievances, it should be applied tentatively and cautiously. A full understanding, in short, of the functions discharged by the family in the social organisation would probably reveal many ulterior and vitally important consequences of any change in its constitution to which the rough calculations of the utilitarian are necessarily insensible. We are not at present, if we ever shall be, scientific sociologists, but the bare recognition of the possibility of such a science, the knowledge that there are laws, if only we could discover them, implies the application of a method of enquiry totally different from that which suggests itself to a crude utilitarian.

110. Finally, we may remark that the same imperfection explains Hume's inadequate appreciation of the true value of the great moral forces. The conscience had always been associated with a belief in supernatural penalties. Those penalties had become incredible. Therefore, the instincts called conscience had no real significance. A real historical sense, which is but another side of a true conception of sociology, would have suggested to him a more adequate measure of feelings, which have played so vast a part in the development of the human race, even if he had not personally sympathised with them. But Hume, like other philosophers

¹ I shall remark hereafter how these principles were marked out by Godwin—a distinguished disciple of Hume's philosophy.

of his time, was content to class the Puritan creed as 'enthusiastic,' and the Catholic as 'superstitious;' and, seeing the weakness of these beliefs, to infer, very illogically, the nullity of their positions. This inadequate view of history, or, in other words, of the unity and continuity of the race, is thus the main source of Hume's defects as a moralist, as well as of other shortcomings.

111. One side of Hume's theory remains to be considered, and it is of vital importance to the later history of moral speculation. How is morality to be preserved? What are the motives upon which we must ultimately rely to secure observance of the moral law, whatever its criterion or the faculty which discovers it? A moral law, supernaturally revealed and enforced by supernatural sanctions, may be enforced upon beings corrupt by nature. But if the law be derived from man as well as imposed upon man, it must reflect the qualities of the legislator. To anyone, then, who, like Hume, declines to look outside the visible universe for the explanation of any phenomena, it follows that the ultimate source of the virtuous affections must be discovered in the human heart. The theological dogmas, regarded by divines as imposed from without, can only be the modes by which the human intellect in its earlier stages interpreted its own aspirations to itself. Hume, therefore, agrees to some extent with Shaftesbury, in restoring the nobler element which theologians had banished from our nature. Man, according to Hume, has made God after his own image, and whatever appears in the divine ideal must be a reflection from the intellect which framed it.

112. It is, therefore, an essential part of Hume's theory to demonstrate the reality of the altruistic sentiments. A scientific method must admit the existence of feelings recognised by consciousness. We admire, so his argument runs, conduct which is useful. 'But *useful*? For what? For somebody's interest, surely. Whose interest, then? Not our own only; for our approbation frequently extends further. It must, therefore, be the interest of those who are served by the character or action approved of; and these, we may conclude, however remote, are not totally indifferent to us.'¹ Powerful

¹ Hume's Works, iv. 206.

as is the passion of self-love, it is easy to discover instances which are not resolvable into it; for moral approbation survives where our private interests are separable from, or even opposed to, the public interests. Sympathy, in short, is natural. Nobody would tread with equal indifference upon the pavement and upon the gouty toes of a man with whom he had no quarrel.¹ And, however weak the sympathy is supposed, it is enough to prove the case. Once grant that a man is not purely selfish, and experience alone can prove how strong may be the unselfish element of our nature. The fact that it exists sufficiently upsets the antecedent metaphysical objections. These objections are considered in an appendix specially devoted to the subject. Hume argues that, even if true in a sense, they are irrelevant. Should a 'philosophical chemistry' be capable of resolving all passions into modifications of self-love, the distinction between self-love in its primitive state as regard to our own interests and its modified state as regard for the interests of others, is still of vital importance. The colour of a countenance would not be less beautiful though we should discover it to be produced by minute variations in the thickness of the skin.² The analysis, however, cannot be easily admitted. The explanation which admits the elementary character of benevolence is the simplest and probably the truest. Though we often conceal from ourselves the true nature of our motives, it is not because our motives are abstruse; nor is it easy to resolve the affections of animals into 'refined deductions of self-interest,'³ and to suppose the maternal tenderness traceable through all orders of sensible beings to be self-love in disguise. Finally, in an argument borrowed from Butler, Hume tries to show that every appetite must exist antecedently to its gratification, and that self-love thus implies the existence of other passions, amongst which we may recognise benevolence, as naturally as thirst or hunger.

113. Whatever the force of this reasoning, it must be admitted that there is a great appearance of logic in a different conclusion. The doctrine that each man can only care for his own happiness is terribly plausible, and fits in admirably with individualism. If men have been moulded by their social relations, they should have impulses explicable only by

¹ Hume's Works, p. 212.

² *Ib.* iv. 268.

³ *Ib.* iv. 270.

reference to social conditions. If men are fully intelligible as isolated individuals, and this assumption seems to be in accordance with the general tenor of Hume's philosophy, such impulses must appear to be unaccountable. If society, in other words, is a mere aggregate of independent units, and not an organic compound of related units, altruistic emotions are superfluous. Hume, indeed, escapes by appealing to experience; and experience—we may fully agree—amply justifies him. But then it seems necessary to admit the truth of his theory that anything may cause anything, and therefore to accept as an infallible fact what could hardly be anticipated from his general principles; or, perhaps, we may admit that Hume had an indistinct view of results which he could not explicitly formulate. Meanwhile, it was easier for most thinkers of his school to accept the explanation which he rejected, and to assume that altruism was merely self-love disguised. This indeed may be regarded as an early form of the explanation which we may probably regard as the soundest—namely, that the altruistic feelings are developed out of self-regarding feelings, though they have come to be something radically different. So long, however, as the development is supposed to take place in each individual, and an hereditary predisposition is tacitly denied, the doctrine tends to lapse into a more or less undisguised selfishness. In Mandeville it had appeared in the coarsest shape, as he denied that virtue is anything but a pretence. In later writers of the Benthamite school, the difficulty is more or less skillfully surmounted; but they generally show a reluctance, as did Bentham himself, to admit the possibility of a perfectly disinterested motive.

114. This tendency comes out in a different shape in another school of writers, which may probably be regarded as the dominant school of the century. Theological doctrine may be interpreted as purely selfish, though writers of more or less mystic tendency try to free it from the imputation. When the animating principle of the moral law is regarded as the will of a supernatural being, and that being is fashioned after the likeness of man, the penalties of disobeying the law become exaggerated to infinite proportions. Hell must be made more terrible the further it is removed from sensible percep-

tion ; and the penalties and rewards become so tremendous, that, if they could be fully realised, selfishness would be inevitable. The fate of his own soul becomes of such importance to each man that he would be mad to care for anything else. What can it profit him if he confers any benefit upon others and loses himself ? If man is corrupt by nature, the ultimate sanction which keeps him in order must be sheer terror of Almighty vengeance. As theology decayed, the tendency of the largest class was, as we have seen at length, to remove the miraculous from the present, and to leave it in the past. The sense of facts was too strong to admit of any belief in supernatural agency in the eighteenth century ; but, if the desire for logical unity was weak, it would still be allowed to find a refuge in the first century. In moral speculation the same tendency exhibited itself in the admission that men's conduct must be regulated by ordinary prudence, but with a retention of the fear of hell as a sufficient motive to clench moral doubts. There was nothing, it was plain, supernatural about our immediate motives, but a supernatural object in the extreme distance might be allowed to have an occasional influence. In ninety-nine out of a hundred actions men might be guided by common sense, exerted upon obvious considerations ; but, if in the hundredth a man was tempted to step beyond the line, or if he insisted upon raising some remote question as to ultimate grounds of action, it was convenient to have a hell in the background. How the existence of hell could be proved consistently with the ordinary philosophy was one of those awkward questions which concerned only philosophers, and in regard to which the ordinary philosopher was apt to reply by sending a man back to common sense. This kind of theological utilitarianism was specially prevalent during the last half of the century, and we must notice one or two of the principal writers.

115. Less philosophical, it was a more convenient compromise between the old and the new. The orthodox teachers protested against all attempts to found theism or morality upon unassisted reasoning. Human ignorance, according to them, made it necessary that God should be made known to man by supernatural intervention, and human corruption that his law should be enforced upon them by supernatural sanctions.

As the evidences became more prominent in theological, so hell became of more importance in their ethical, speculations. And hence arose a coarse form of morality which, however, suited the temper of the age. Waterland, whose views upon the evidences of Christianity have already been noticed, may stand equally for a representative specimen of the Christian system of morality as Christianity was then understood. In a pamphlet which gave rise to a bitter controversy, he attacked Clarke's 'Exposition of the Catechism.' His wrath was aroused partly by certain symptoms of incipient Arianism in his adversary, but still more by a distinction drawn by Clarke between moral and positive duties. The distinction had been put into an epigrammatic form in Tillotson's assertion that a man had better never take the sacrament in his life than kill people for not taking it. In opposition to this doctrine, Waterland points out, with considerable logical vigour, that the distinction between moral and positive has been confounded by his adversaries with the distinction between external and internal. It is needless to follow him into the intricacies of the argument. Shortly stated, it is his view that all duties, whether moral or positive, are binding because they are imposed by God. Duty means simply obedience to a divine law, and it is not for us to enquire into the reasons for the commands given by the supreme authority. Obedience to a positive command may sometimes acquire greater value than obedience to a moral law; as is proved by his favourite case of Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac—a deed which, as he assumes, has rendered its doer 'more famous both in heaven and on earth than all his moral virtues put together.'¹

116. Waterland is a utilitarian so far as regards the criterion of morality, and he lays it down as a principle that we are to test the relative importance of divine commands, not by asking which is moral and which is positive, but by asking what depends upon our conscientious obedience to them; or, in other words, which is most conducive to the general good.² He is thus conducted to a definition of virtue substantially identical with the well-known dogma of Paley. 'Moral goodness,' he says, 'is choosing and performing those beneficial actions upon a principle of obedience and out of love to God.'³

¹ Waterland, Works, iv. 46.² *Ib.* p. 69.³ *Ib.* p. 78

It is thus essential to a virtuous action that it should be performed not only from love of God, but from the love of the God revealed in the Bible. Accepting fully the orthodox dogma of the intrinsic vileness of all human actions, he speaks with the utmost contempt of all the pagan virtues. The good deeds of the heathen, like the good deeds of the brutes, are 'materially,' not 'formally,' virtuous. The absence of the right motive vitiates them. Socrates was hopelessly inferior to Abraham or St. Paul, because his acts, though externally of the same character, were not grounded on the same faith and hope. In fact, Socrates was not virtuous because he did not do right with a view to posthumous repayment. Rather, it seems, he should be called a fool or a madman. Suppose there was no God, he says, it might be fit for a man to discharge the moral duties 'so far as is consistent or coincident with his temporal happiness. That would be no virtue nor duty, but self-interest only, and love of the world. But if he proceeds further to sacrifice his own temporal happiness to the public, that, indeed, would be virtue and duty, on the supposition that God requires it; but without it, it is folly and madness. There is neither prudence nor good sense in preferring the happiness of others absolutely to our own, that is to say, without prospect of a future equivalent. But if God commands us to postpone our present interest, honour, or pleasure, to public considerations, it is then fitting and reasonable so to do; for God, by engaging us to it, becomes our security that we shall not finally or in the last result be losers by it. What would otherwise be folly now commences duty and virtue, and puts on obligation.'¹

117. The theory thus expounded has an additional element of repulsiveness in Waterland's assumption, not only that virtue consists in giving credit to God for repayment of our sufferings, but that we should be mere fools to trust any God but his own. The doctrine is purified of that hideous corollary by later writers, and of the same school; but substantially the same theory was maintained by the most accepted teachers of the century. Its recommendation to men of strong common sense is obvious. It enabled them to threaten evildoers with hell-fire, instead of appealing to vague

¹ Waterland's Works, iv. 111.

fitnesses of things, or to a moral sense only perceptible to philosophers. At the same time it kept God at a convenient distance. It exiled mystery from the affairs of daily life, but left a dark background of terror sufficient to keep criminals in awe. It may be considered, indeed, as a crude mode of expressing some important truths; on the one hand, it admitted that the rule of life was to be discovered from experience, and not from a *priori* theories, which had too little consistency to be a safe guide; on the other, it asserted—in a crude and brutal fashion enough—the necessity of some religious sentiment to restrain the selfish passions of mankind. And thus it was essentially a compromise which could not satisfy a truly philosophical mind, but which did well enough as a stopgap, borrowing its term from the old theology, and drawing upon experience for practical guidance.

118. The theory of Bishop Law, or of the Rev. Mr. Gay—for Gay, it seems, chiefly compiled the essay which was adopted by Law—is given in an introduction to Law's translation of Archbishop King's 'Origin of Evil.' This introduction is remarkable because, as already noticed, it helped to suggest Hartley's theory of association. Two or three propositions extracted from its pages will sufficiently indicate its general character.

'Virtue is conformity to a rule of life, directing the actions of all rational creatures with respect to each other's happiness; to which conformity everyone is in all cases obliged, and everyone that does so conform is, or ought to be, approved, esteemed, and loved for so doing.' 'Obligation is the necessity of doing or omitting any action in order to be happy.' God alone can make a perfect obligation, for he alone can, 'in all cases, make a man happy or miserable.' As God wishes men to be happy, the happiness of mankind 'may be said to be a criterion of virtue but once removed.' Happiness is the general end of all our actions, and 'moral goodness or moral virtue in man is not merely choosing or producing pleasure or natural good, but choosing it without a view to present rewards, and in prospect of a future recompense only.'

119. The ablest and most original exponent of this theory was Abraham Tucker, author of the 'Light of Nature Pursued.' Few men have led more blameless or happier

lives than this neglected philosopher. He was a rich country gentleman, spending his summers on his estate and his winters in London. But, unlike his neighbours, he delighted neither in fox-hunting nor in place-hunting. Philosophical theories were the game which he loved to follow through all the intricacies of some speculative labyrinth, and his ambition was to be received as a worthy colleague of Locke instead of Chatham. His devotion to abstract enquiries was free from the slightest tinge of moroseness or indifference to practical affairs. He was an example of that rarest of all intellectual compounds, the metaphysical humourist. He might have stood for a likeness of Mr. Shandy; and Montaigne is perhaps the writer to whom, though at a long distance, he bears the closest resemblance. The mixture of shrewdness and kindness which made him active and amiable in all the relations of life shows itself in every page of his book. Listening to abstract disquisitions upon theology, ethics, and metaphysics, we strangely learn to love the author, whose eye is always twinkling with suppressed humour even in the gravest passages of his discourse. There is something so simple and childlike in his outbreaks of playfulness, that his incongruities never shock us. Indeed, his illustrations, quaint as they may be, have frequently the merit of an almost incomparable felicity. We can see the old gentleman writing in his study, and when perplexed to explain his theories, raising his eyes and smiling complacently, as he presses into his service the first object that meets his gaze. The childish game of cat's-cradle, the handiwork of the village carpenter, the groom saddling a horse, a girl going to a ball, or something that reminds him of his own courtship; these and a hundred other familiar objects enable him to expound his views on fate, free-will, a future life, the mechanism of the human mind, and the purposes of the Almighty. To be candid is part of his nature; a difficulty, instead of heating his temper, receives a genuine welcome, for does it not give one more problem over which he may brood for hours, and which may serve as a point of attachment for new webs of theory? No one ever more fully appreciated the maxim, that the search after truth—'Search' is the significant pseudonym which he adopts—is more delightful than the fruition. He would

have regarded a fallacy which was too easily exposed just as a sportsman would regard a fox which did not give him a good run. An antagonist is therefore a friend in disguise, to be met with a quaint joke, instead of a bitter sarcasm. No man's pen was ever freer from gall. And, of course, it follows that Tucker is not seldom wearisome and immeasurably prolix. The last twenty years of his life were devoted to the composition of his book; and he has no intention to spare his readers one inch of the devious track which he has followed throughout that time. He never hurries; he cares nothing for concentration; the twentieth statement of any proposition is as prolix as the first; and he utterly ignores the principle that the secret of being tedious is to say everything.

120. This fault has been fatal to anything like a wide popularity of the 'Light of Nature.' Nine readers out of ten are probably repelled after a time by the boundless garrulity of his philosophical gossip. Vivacious, amiable, and cheerful as he may be, one longs to say, Do, for heaven's sake, take something for granted! But the old gentleman benignantly follows out his plan in its minutest details, and cares not for the diminution of his audience. Yet those who have the courage to follow him will be repaid, if by nothing else, at least by a curious exhibition of character, and by some curious illustrations of contemporary modes of thought.

121. To compress such a book into a few paragraphs is necessarily to do it injustice, for the irrelevant passages must be omitted, and the irrelevant passages are often just the most charming. It would be difficult, for example, to cite a more amusingly characteristic passage in any book than the chapter called the 'Vision,' which occupies over seventy closely printed octavo pages in the last edition of his works. But how give an idea within any shorter limits of the singular experience of the disembodied or partially disembodied Tucker; of the strange flashes of playful humour, and pathetic sentiment, and reverent emotion, which are blended into a unique whole, equally calculated to provoke smiles and sympathy? The dreaming soul is separated from his body, but still enveloped in a kind of minute bag, which, it appears, is the semi-corporeal abode of spirits in the 'vehicular state.' The

bag has a strange power of shooting forth a head and limbs at the will of its occupant; and his first introduction in the new world is to a similar bag, looking like a bladder filled with air, from which protrudes the 'meagre lankjawed face' of his master Locke.¹ By the instruction of his friend he learns to skate upon rays of light, and to talk after a new fashion, and, thus accomplished, performs strange journeys and hears strange converse in the world of spirits. He is put through a bit of dialectics by Socrates, and listens to an oration from Pythagoras, and talks sentiment with his long-lost Eurydice, and makes fun of Stahl, till the German philosopher shuts himself up in his bag; and is grievously bullied by Borgia in the likeness of a spider; and all the while, he and Locke carry on a queer running comment, changing strangely from grave to gay, but everywhere pervaded by a quaint tinge of humour. This bag bursts for a time, and he is absorbed in the mundane soul, and hears unspeakable things and witnesses solemn visions; but he speedily returns to his vehicle, and finally descending to a huge mountain, 'with a monstrous gaping chasm on one side, from whence issue black streams of fuliginous vapour,' discovers it to be his head, and entering with difficulty through one of the pores, sticky and miry with insensible perspiration, again takes his place in the seat of life.²

122. I must refrain, however, from following these strange flights of fancy, in order to attempt a brief summary of the system which is gradually shadowed forth in this strangely discursive performance. Tucker, as already noticed, is a disciple of Locke, of whom he always speaks with the warmest reverence. Indeed, he clings to those opinions of his master which had been exploded by Berkeley and Hume. He never, I believe, mentions Hume; but he frequently attacks Berkeley, and by falling into the usual fallacies on the subject, exhibits his want of metaphysical acuteness; for, indeed, it is exclusively as a psychologist and as a moralist that Tucker has great speculative merit. From Hartley he has borrowed much, whilst at the same time he regards the leader of the association philosophy with a feeling as nearly approaching to dislike as can find room in his kindly bosom. Starting

¹ Tucker's 'Light of Nature,' i. 423.

² *Ib.* l. 493.

from such principles, Tucker's theological system presents no particular novelty, except where his quaint fancy has engrafted some odd hypothesis upon the older doctrines. He is a rationalist after the pattern of Locke; and through many chapters of wearisome length he labours to accommodate the mysterious dogmas of Christianity to a rational interpretation. By the ordinary devices, he explains away the doctrines of the Trinity, the Atonement, the Fall of Man, and the Sacraments, until they may be accepted, even by a pure deist, without much effort—though in treading those perilous paths, it is probable that Tucker has unconsciously stepped into some very heretical propositions. The fundamental method of his reconciliation is significant.

123. God, according to him, is to the universe what the watchmaker is to the watch¹—an illustration which Paley may have borrowed, along with much else, from his favourite author. Further, we may, if we please, hold that the material universe is one stupendous engine, which has been made from everlasting, and is never in want of winding up, or interference from the Creator.² Tucker, however, inclines to the opinion that the Almighty artificer does occasionally interfere, though only on rare and important occasions.³ 'God is not profuse of his own omnipotence. He employs it rarely, upon those occasions only wherein he had rendered it necessary by leaving deficiencies in his plan of nature, purposely to admit these interpositions of his own hand, which he had predetermined from everlasting. Nor yet does he perform his extraordinary works wholly by his own power, but with the concurrence of second causes, turning and keeping them in the course wherein they will naturally bring forth the predestined event.'⁴ Tucker, in short, is jealous of the Divine interference. It is equally important that we should believe in a God, and that we should make as little use of him as possible. The higher our reverence for the watchmaker, the less the need for his interfering with the instrument. This theory, however much it might satisfy Tucker the philosopher,

¹ Tucker, 'Things Providential,' sec. 11, ii. 83; and 'Providence,' sec. 9, i. 525.

² Ib. 'Things Providential,' ii. 85.

³ Ib. 'Providence,' sec. 11, i. 527.

⁴ Ib. 'Christian Scheme,' sec. 35, ii. 400.

was felt as unsatisfactory by Tucker the moralist and the religious thinker. A large part of his discursive performance is devoted to various attempts to reconcile the abstract doctrine with a doctrine more adapted for practical use ; or, in other words, to show that the God thus revealed to us by reason is still the God whom we worship in church and obey in ordinary life. He applies his ingenuity in the spheres both of natural and revealed religion. Thus a chapter in the later part of his book is devoted to the distinction between ' esoterics and exoterics.' A man, he says, ' has one cast of mind for the closet, another to serve him when he enters into the busy world.'¹ The philosopher is the wholesale trader, who ' deals only in tons and hogsheads ; ' there is need also of the retailer who may ' pick or sort and parcel out his wares, and mingle them in such compositions as you shall scarce know the ingredients, yet shall find them fit for your immediate consumption.'² The first is the function of the reason, and the second of the imagination, which is the practical guide in ordinary affairs. ' Philosophy,' as he forcibly remarks, ' may be styled the art of marshalling the ideas in the understanding, and religion that of disciplining the imagination.' And thus it is possible, or rather necessary, to make assumptions in our daily life, which, though not inaccurate, cut short the long trains of reasoning which are required in speculation. Thus, for example, everything is providential to the philosopher, for everything comes by a longer or shorter chain of cause and effects from the action of the first great cause. But it would be considering too curiously—as Tucker cannot refrain from illustrating by some singular instances³—if we insisted on seeing in every trifling or disgusting object the immediate working of the Divine hand. It is wise therefore to stop short, as a rule, at second causes. We should call only those things providential which bear evident marks of wisdom and goodness. ' When things are propounded as providential, let a man examine impartially and courageously whether he feels them operate as such upon his imagination ; if he does not, they are not providential to him.'⁴ Or, to take

¹ Tucker, ' Esoterics and Exoterics,' sec. 5, ii. 20.

² *Ib.* sec. 7, ii. 22.

³ See e.g. ' Divine Purity,' sec. 6, ii. 28.

⁴ *Ib.* ' Things Providential,' sec. 3, ii. 73, and see *ib.* sec. 9, ii. 80.

a rather different instance, we may rightly pray for external things; for, though prayer has no influence in obtaining them, it obtains that 'ease and pleasure' which are the reasons for which we desire them.¹ Yet, as a rule, it is best to keep the thought of Divine interference at a distance. In Tucker's own language, he recommends every man 'to remove the finger of God from him, as far as he can without letting it go beyond the reach of his comprehension; if he believes the grace in his heart owing to a supernatural interposition of the Spirit, still he may place a line of second causes between the act of God and the effect he feels.'² Every movement of the watch is ultimately attributable to the watchmaker, but, as a rule, we had better limit our investigation to the works.

124. The system is illustrated still more curiously in his pure theology. God, he tells us, may be considered in two characters, as Creator and as Governor of the universe.³ As Creator, he dwells in inaccessible light, where the eye of man is dazzled into blindness. As Governor, he is more discernible, and is 'clothed with milder rays of glory, the subject of our hope and confidence as well as our admiration.'⁴ It is here that we can trace his power, wisdom, omnipotence, and goodness. In order to give additional distinctness, he revives, after his own fashion, the ancient hypothesis of the mundane soul. The atoms of which the material world is composed are bathed, as it were, in a vast ocean of spiritual substance. The infinite multitude of spirits in the 'vehicular state' compose this ocean, lying in close contiguity to each other, and every perception of one is immediately propagated through all the intermediate spirits to every other. Had the modern discoveries in electricity been then familiar, Tucker would doubtless have pressed them into his service for a more vivid illustration of his theories. These spirits form collectively a universal soul, which is unspeakably happy, and feels no more at the trivial evils which may happen to any of the comparatively small number of embodied spirits than a man who had just had a great piece of good fortune would feel at the breaking of a china saucer.⁵ When God gave the order, this mundane soul formed the world in accordance with the

¹ Tucker, 'Divine Services,' sec. 9, ii. 433.

⁴ Ib. sec. 5, i. 367.

² Ib. 'Grace,' sec. 5, ii. 179.

⁵ 'Mundane Soul,' sec. 23, i. 415.

³ Ib. 'Two Characters in God.' Theology, ch. xviii.

Divine plan. 'The six days' formation being ended, though God rested from commanding, his agent did not rest from acting; for his reason could now direct him how to proceed in sustaining the work he had been taught to make. He still continued to turn the grand wheel of repulsion, that first mover in the wondrous machine of visible nature, all whose movements follow one another uninterruptedly for ages according to stated laws and in regular courses, without failure or disorder in any single wheel.'¹ When the fulness of time is come, God will give the signal for the reduction of everything to chaos—to be followed by the promulgation of a new plan and the employment of the mundane soul in its execution.

125. The purpose of this curious hypothesis—Tucker is superfluously careful to tell us that it is only an hypothesis—is to relieve the difficulty of our imaginations, and to present us with a secondary God not so mysterious as the Almighty himself. Tucker revels so much in discussing the complexities of his theory, and arguing for its possibility, that he seems half to lose sight of its hypothetical character, and still more completely of its utility. For, after all, it is plain enough that we are no nearer to any solution of the difficulty than we were before. God the Creator is still the true God, and the mundane soul is merely a wheel the more in the vast machinery of the universe. For Tucker realises fully, though he sometimes loses sight of the truth in his voluminous torrent of words, that neither chance, nor free-will, nor nature are in reality 'original springs of events.'² The Creator is really also the Disposer of events. The watchmaker has predetermined every movement of the watch. The mundane soul is merely a viceroy, to whom we may refer in imagination, but who is really the agent for carrying out the designs of the supreme sovereign.

126. His ethical theory, in fact, is constructed exclusively on the watchmaking plan. God, according to Tucker's conception, has framed the machine, and then allowed it to act by itself. From the beauty of the various contrivances we may infer his wisdom and power; from their tendency to promote our happiness we may infer his benevolence and justice. But he does not remain with us as a guide, nor leave

¹ Tucker, 'Mundane Soul,' sec. 20, i. 414.

² *Ib.* 'Things Providential,' sec. 2, ii. 71.

any supernatural monitor within our breasts to warn us of what is pleasing to him. Our own natural instincts are sufficient to lead us, as the force of gravity is sufficient to keep the stars in their courses without further interference. And thus morality, like everything else, is merely the product of natural forces. Following his master Locke, Tucker has banished all innate ideas and everything that savours of the mysterious in human nature. The one simple force which drives the machinery is our desire for happiness. That is the ultimate end of all men. No one can assert more emphatically that the measure of morality is the tendency of actions to promote happiness, and that the aim of every particular individual is to secure his own happiness. In his chapter on 'Doing all for the Glory of God' he says that a man's first step 'must be by a thorough conviction of his judgment that acting for the divine Glory is acting most for his own benefit.' 'I have observed all along,' he adds, 'that self lies at the bottom of everything we do; in all our actions we constantly pursue the satisfaction grounded on something apprehended beneficial in our judgment or soothing in our fancy; the purest affections grow from one or other of these roots, and the sublimest of our virtues must be engrafted upon the former; therefore the love of God, to be sincere and vigorous, must spring from the settled opinion of his goodness and beneficence, and that every act of conformity to his will is beneficial to the performer.'¹ The farsighted selfishness which teaches us to imitate God supplies also the motives for obeying his commands. Tucker gives us in one place a philosophical version of the Ten Commandments. He imagines an angel sent from heaven to deliver a divine message in these words: 'Know that if thou shalt worship chance or necessity, an uncreated nature, or any God beside me; if thou shalt,' in short, break any other of the commandment, 'know that in so doing thou actest foolishly, for by all these things thou wilt lose far greater enjoyment than thou canst gain for the present, and bring down intolerable mischiefs upon thy head.'² God has spoken from this utilitarian Sinai, and declares to all his creatures that vice is a bad speculation.

¹ Tucker, 'Doing all for the Glory of God,' sec. 4, ii. 508.

² *Ib.* 'Divine Justice,' sec. 4, i. 626.

127. The harshness of this selfish doctrine is partly softened by the theory which Tucker had learnt from Hartley. The principle of association, or, as Tucker chooses to call it, translation, is that which transmutes the base metal of selfishness into the gold of benevolence. 'Though flowers,' he says, 'grow out of the dirt,' they retain nothing of the foulness of their original source; and so 'charity, though shooting most vigorously from rational self-love, yet, when perfectly formed, has no tincture remaining of the parent root.'¹ Thus we forget the ultimate end in the means, and from doing good because it is our interest, learn to do it without conscious reference to any ulterior purpose. The benevolent impulses, however, though thus transformed, retain far more of their original character than in the scheme of Hartley. The ultimate end is not taken into account in every action, but it always remains in the background to be referred to, if necessary, in justification of our conduct. We resemble travellers carrying a general map of the country, which exhibits the right path as leading, though often by a circuitous route, to our ultimate destination. For practical purposes, we are often content with more limited plans, which represent the path as apparently deviating from the true direction; but we are content because we know that the larger map will show that the deviation is only in appearance.

128. Thus Tucker discusses at intervals the critical case of Regulus, which was a kind of standing puzzle for the moralists of the time. If Regulus did right, he says, it must have been because 'he acted more for his own happiness in the sequel than he could have done by any breach of faith.'² He admits it to be possible, theoretically, that the satisfaction which Regulus felt in acting rightly might have 'overbalanced the pain of the tenters.'³ And yet it seems, on further consideration, that a man ought to know when to make exceptions to general rules, and should have known in such a case that the suffering could not be compensated by the pleasure. 'Upon the whole,' he says, 'we are forced to acknowledge that hitherto we have found no reason to imagine a wise man would ever die for his country or suffer martyrdom in the cause of virtue, how strong propensity soever he might feel

¹ Tucker, 'Charity,' sec. 3, ii. 281

² 'Ib. 'Virtue,' sec. 10, i. 222.

³ 'Ib. 'Rectitude,' sec. 7, i. 214.

in himself to maintain her interests.' ¹ After 'searching every corner of the human breast' ² we have found our own satisfaction to be the sole spring of all our actions and the ultimate end of all our contrivances. ² How, then, are we to escape from the dilemma? for Tucker begs his readers not to imagine, even for a time, that this atrocious condemnation of all self-sacrifice is really his last word. To discover a satisfactory solution of the enigma, Tucker has to lead us through all the labyrinths of his theological system. Ultimately he emerges with a discovery which is made known to us in a chapter on the 'Re-enlargement of Virtue.' After explaining its nature, we may now, he says, 'do ample justice to Regulus, whom we left under a sentence of folly for throwing away life with all its enjoyments for a phantom of honour. For he may allege that he had not a fair trial before, his principal evidence being out of the way, which, having since collected in the course of his second book, he moves for a rehearing.' In fact, Regulus now pleads that he was doing great good by his example. 'He was persuaded, likewise, that all the good a man does stands placed to his account, to be repaid him in full value when it will be most useful to him; so that whoever works for another works for himself, and by working for numbers earns more than he possibly could by working for himself alone. Therefore he acted like a thrifty merchant, who scruples not to advance considerable sums, and even to exhaust his coffers, for gaining a large advantage to the common stock in partnership.' ³ Regulus, therefore, is acquitted with flying colours. The mode in which Regulus is repaid appears very plainly by the comparison of heaven to a 'universal bank, where accounts are regularly kept and every man debited or credited for the least farthing he takes out or brings in.' ⁴ The bank of heaven has many advantages, indeed, over the Bank of England; not only is the security perfect, but the rate of interest is enormous; whenever and wherever I may be in want, 'the runner angel' will 'privately slip the proper sum into my hand at a time when I least expect it;' ⁴ and, finally, we can have no reason to be jealous of

¹ Tucker, 'Temptation of Virtue,' sec. 8, i. 272.

² *Ib.* i. 273.

³ *Ib.* 'Re-enlargement of Virtue,' sec. 5, i. 665.

⁴ *Ib.* 'General Good,' sec. 9, i. 621.

the larger balances of other customers, for we are all dealing in partnership and we shall all profit equally.

129. This last phrase suggests one curious whim of the worthy Tucker, with which I may conclude my account of his system. He persuades himself that, since God gives everything, he must give an equal share to everybody; or that, as he puts it, 'the value of each person's existence, computed throughout the whole extent of his being,' must be 'precisely the same.'¹ This singular inference would appear to cut at the very roots of Tucker's theory; for it would prove that, as in the long run all actions are indifferent, rational self-love could not prompt one course of conduct more than another. Tucker succeeds in reconciling himself to the conclusion by various ingenious devices, resting on the general principle that the mind can only take into account a certain length of time; we can see far enough before us to realise that vice will be punished in the next world, and not far enough to realise that the punishment will be finally compensated after some indefinitely vast lapse of time. A thousand years or so of torment would, he thinks, be enough to deter a man from wickedness, though they might be followed by an eternity of happiness. The strange whim, characteristic of a solitary and half-trained thinker, had the recommendation to him that it enables him to get rid of eternal punishment. He takes a view of our destinies almost as cheerful as that of Hartley. By a queer series of calculations, founded on certain hypothetical statistics as to the vehicular state, he persuades himself that our whole amount of suffering may be equivalent to a 'minute of pain once in every twenty-two years.'² The minutes of trouble, however, often come 'so thick together' that they prevent us from seeing beyond them to the remoter ages of happiness.

130. Let us hope that this kindly extravagance solaced the good Tucker, when the evil of the world pressed too heavily on his soul; if it rather shakes our belief in his intellectual vigour, it helps to complete the portrait of a singularly innocent, cheerful, and kindly temperament. The moral theory which, in other hands, seems to involve a

¹ Tucker, 'Equality,' sec. 2, i. 597.

² Ib. 'Divine Economy,' sec. 39, ii. 364.

degrading view of human nature, seems with him to be the natural expression of cheerful common sense.

131. Paley, in the preface to his 'Moral and Political Philosophy,' candidly acknowledges his great obligations to Tucker. Their theories are, in fact, nearly identical. The whimsical fancies which adorn or disfigure Tucker's pages have indeed disappeared. We hear nothing of the mundane soul, the vehicular state, or the equality of all human lives. Paley is a hard-headed North-countryman, whose chief mental sustenance has been a severe course of Cambridge mathematics. He is throughout a systematiser, not an original thinker; and his system begins by expelling as far as possible everything that is not as solid and tangible as a proposition in Euclid. Moreover, his ethical treatise is, in fact, intended for educational purposes. In such works, clearness and order are the cardinal virtues, and originality, if not a vice, is of equivocal advantage. Paley primarily is a condenser and a compiler; though he modestly enough claims to be 'more than a mere compiler.'¹ He gives a lucid summary of the most generally accepted system; and if there is any gleam of originality in his writing, it is, for the most part, such as occasionally results from a rearrangement of old materials. Law, afterwards Bishop of Carlisle, and Waterland, were both heads of houses, and Rutherford a professor of divinity at Cambridge.² Paley was an intimate friend and colleague in the tuition of Christ College of John Law, son of the Bishop of Carlisle, and it was from the Bishop that he received his first preferment. Locke's Essay was the main authority upon which he relied in his college lectures. Thus, the influences under which he was placed were all favourable to that phase of utilitarianism which we are considering; and Paley, with his undeniable merits as a reasoner, was not the man to desert the paths into which he had been guided. He has simply given a compact statement of what may be called the orthodox theory.

¹ Works, i. xlix.

² Rutherford's views may be sufficiently indicated by one entry in the index to his 'Essay on the Nature and Obligations of Virtue.' 'Disinterestedness, instance of it, 109; accounted for, 110.' He accounts for it by showing that it does not exist. The obligation to virtue is the future reward or punishment known by Revelation.

132. Thus he attacks the moral sense theory by the arguments of Locke, with some additions from later writers. Caius Toranius, he says, betrayed his father to the executioners under circumstances of special atrocity. Would the wild boy who was caught in the woods of Hanover have disapproved the action?¹ Paley's answer is that he would not have disapproved it. His reasons are that, in the first place, the moral sense varies indefinitely; that, in the second place, its growth is sufficiently explained by the theory of association, which causes us to transfer to actions generally useful, the sentiment which is excited by actions useful to ourselves; and, thirdly, because there are no moral laws 'absolutely and universally true,' and we, therefore, cannot have an intuitive perception of their truth. Moreover, the moral sense, if it exists, must be justified by some external test, or how can we arbitrate between different moral intuitions? That test, of course, is the production of happiness, and happiness consists, not in the sensual pleasures, or in the mere absence of pain, or in rank and power, but in the exercise of the social affections, in the devotion of our faculties to 'some engaging end,' in the prudent arrangement of our habits, and in health. Happiness, therefore, is equally distributed throughout all ranks, and the vicious have no advantage—even in this world—over the virtuous.

133. Having thus cleared the ground, Paley proposes, with somewhat amazing calmness, his definition of virtue. 'Virtue is the doing good to mankind, in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness.'² It is characteristic that this doctrine is propounded as though it were a self-evident truth. Paley proclaims it as calmly as if he were giving Euclid's definition of parallel straight lines, as though the statement bore its own evidence with it. To most later thinkers it has appeared to be as palpably false as to him it appeared to be palpably true; and there can be no more curious proof of the firmness with which the doctrine of theological utilitarianism had established itself than the calm enunciation of its most questionable tenet as an ultimate truth by a singularly clear-headed thinker, and that at the very time when he is maintaining the necessity of basing all moral

¹ Paley's Works, i. 7.

² Ib. i. 27

theories on experience. His argument, indeed, betrays a half-conscious sense that some justification of the doctrine is needed; for he proceeds to explain, in the spirit of Tucker, that the thought of divine rewards and punishments need not be present to our mind in every action, inasmuch as we generally act from habit, but that thought must have been the foundation of our habits. The best servants learn to act for their master's interests, without thinking of his wishes; but a regard for his wishes must have been the first motive to the formation of the habit. The doctrine is expanded in the chapter on Obligation. A man is 'obliged,' 'when he is urged by a violent motive resulting from the command of another,'¹ whence it follows that 'we can be obliged to nothing but what we ourselves can gain or lose something by.'² To say that we are 'obliged' to keep our words means simply that we shall go to hell if we don't; and 'the difference, and the only difference,' between prudence and virtue is, 'that, in the one case, we consider what we shall gain or lose in the present world; in the other case, we consider also what we shall gain or lose in the world to come.'³

134. To complete the ground-plan of Paley's system, one other doctrine must be added. The moral sanction is the theological; what is the criterion? Paley's answer is, that the rule is the will of God. But how is the will of God to be known? First, by the Scriptures; and, secondly, by the light of nature. But how do we interpret the teaching of nature? By the help of the doctrine that God wishes the happiness of his creatures; whence it follows that, to determine the morality of an action, we must enquire into 'the tendency of the action to promote or diminish the general happiness.'⁴ In carrying out his system, Paley, of course, makes far greater use of this test than of the Scripture test. The primary duties, such as respect for private property and fidelity to promises, are defended purely and simply on utilitarian grounds. Scripture is only invoked where it is necessary to fill up gaps in the code. Thus, for example, Paley, though a keen sportsman, has some difficulty in defending our right over the lives of animals; and he ultimately defends it simply by the permis-

¹ Paley, i. 37.² *Ib.* i. 40.³ *Ib.* i. 38.⁴ *Ib.* i. 42

sion recorded in the ninth chapter of the Book of Genesis.¹ Wanton cruelty, he says, is certainly wrong ; and possibly he would have had some difficulty in defending, on theoretical grounds, his love of fishing.

135. Paley is thus the typical example of the moralists who enjoyed the greatest reputation throughout the eighteenth century. His theology, as we have already seen,² is essentially a belief in God as the contriver, not as the ever-present regulating power of the universe. 'The world,' he says, 'abounds with contrivances,'³ and it is entirely upon those contrivances that here, as in the 'Natural Theology,' he rests his proof of the Divine benevolence. 'The contemplation of universal nature rather bewilders the mind than affects it,'⁴ but when we see teeth made to bite and eyes to see, we are convinced of God's love for his creation. He declares, with a higher tone of sentiment, that he sees 'the benevolence of the Deity more clearly in the pleasures of very young children than in anything else.'⁴ In one shape or another, however, it is by regarding the world as a collection of cunningly contrived machines that we learn to adore the machine-maker. Theological utilitarianism is essentially connected with this form of theology. Heaven and hell are the weights which work the great machine of the universe, so far as it has any moral significance, and love of pleasure and fear of pain the passions through which they act. Paley, however, is not only the clearest, but the last, representative of the doctrine. The system, in fact, when thus elaborated, was rapidly becoming intolerable. Heaven and hell had retired too far from men's minds, and the authority of Scripture had become too feeble to provide an effectual rule. The characteristic laxity of the contemporary theology, represented by such men as Paley, Watson, and Hey, shows that it was, in fact, a rationalism thinly concealed ; and men who wished to affect the thoughts of the world, rather than to compile orthodox summaries for students, hastened to discard the flimsy theological disguises which might do for the schools, but had lost their potency with the mass of mankind. And here, therefore, we arrive at a critical point. The Deism, whether it called itself orthodox or infidel, which had hitherto given a decorous vent to the

¹ Paley, i. 61.² Above, ch. viii.³ Paley, i. 44.⁴ *Ib.* i. 45.

quasi-scientific systems of morality, was to be thrown aside, and the divorce of ethics and theology openly proclaimed. Hume had already reached that point; but Hume's speculations were too much in advance of his age, and too far removed from practical application, to give birth to a corresponding movement in the sphere of practice. A thinker of a very different order was to take the next step, and to open a warfare along the whole line of politics, legislation, and morals, which has not yet subsided.

136. When Paley's treatise appeared, a friend wrote to Jeremy Bentham, then travelling in Russia, that the new writer had anticipated the doctrines of Bentham's 'Principles of Morals and Legislation'—then already in print, though not as yet published.¹ The coincidence, he added, was so close that it almost seemed as if Paley must have seen Bentham's introduction. The relation, indeed, of Bentham's ethical doctrines to Paley's may be expressed by saying that Bentham is Paley *minus* a belief in hell-fire. But Bentham, in another sense, is Paley *plus* a profound faith in himself, and an equally profound respect for realities. Benthamism represents a phenomenon common enough in the history of thought. The conditions have changed, and the germs of belief long dormant suddenly develop unsuspected powers of growth. As Rousseau took the doctrine of abstract rights from the schools into the streets, so Bentham transferred the doctrine of utility from the sphere of speculation to that of immediate legislation. The belief in future rewards and punishments was too effete and too little congenial to the tendencies of that party to which Bentham belonged to survive in his teaching. He held to facts, and was scornful of obsolete theological figments as of obsolete legislative principles. For Paley's placid conservatism he substituted an ardent desire to bring every existing institution to the test of immediate practical utility; and though rejecting the principles of the revolutionary party, as represented by French or American² declaimers, he applied a method less calculated to produce catastrophes, but equally adapted to effect a thorough reconstruction of the old order.

¹ Bentham's Works, x. 163.

² The famous American 'Declaration of Independence' was, in Bentham's view, a 'hodge-podge of confusion and absurdity' (Works, x. 63).

137. I shall not, however, attempt to discuss Bentham's principles or influence. The history of utilitarianism as an active force belongs to the present century; and an adequate estimate of Bentham's achievements would take me far beyond the scope of this book and of my knowledge. Moreover, it is admitted even by Mr. J. S. Mill, the great writer who has pronounced the best judgment upon Bentham from a disciple's point of view, that vast as were Bentham's labours, and great as were their results upon jurisprudence, he effected little or nothing as a philosophical moralist. What he did was to utter, with an emphasis not previously attained, the verdict of common sense upon the flimsy nature of the rival theories; to stimulate the belief in the possibility of basing a moral theory upon observation, and, it may be added, by constantly applying the celebrated 'greatest happiness' formula to bring into clear relief some leading ethical problems, and to help on the emancipation of ethics from theology.

138. All this, however, throws little light upon speculative problems. Bentham, as a moral philosopher, was certainly not in advance of Hume, and is only so far in advance of Tucker or Paley as he abandons the incongruous addition by which they had striven to affiliate their doctrine to the orthodox teaching. The main difficulty remained unaltered. Utilitarianism is an attempt to base morality upon observation, instead of following the *a priori* method. But from the point of view of Bentham, as from that of his predecessors, this was to reduce it to a mere chaos of empirical doctrines. A science of morality presupposes certain principles which belong to the sciences of psychology and sociology. Whilst the very conception of such sciences was scarcely entertained, the attempt to give a scientific account of morality was necessarily imperfect. According to Mr. Mill, Bentham overlooked the 'moral part of man's nature in the strict sense of the term,'¹ and was totally indifferent to historical considerations. That is to say, he was ignorant or careless of the two kinds of knowledge which are most essential to ethical speculation. Naturally, his results were unsatisfactory.

139. Bentham, indeed, attempted to provide a scientific apparatus by a classification of pains and pleasures. Such

¹ Mill's 'Dissertations,' 1. 360.

a classification could not be exhaustive, except as a statement of his own emotions; and, as Mr. Mill fully shows, his life and character made his knowledge of the great springs of action singularly limited. But, in any case, it could not afford a secure base for reasoning. To compare the value to the individual of different classes of pleasures and pains, we must understand something of the nature and relations of the faculties affected. To understand their importance to the community, we must have a clear view of the nature of the social organisation. Otherwise our attempts at calculating the consequences of action leave out the only element by which unity can be given to the resulting system. We may roughly sum up the evil consequences produced by a murder to its victim, and the people more indirectly affected. But we cannot treat the question scientifically till we can analyse the nature of the moral disease of which the murderous impulse is a symptom, and of the morbid social conditions which generate murderers. Thus the method is as crude as, in some cases, the results are unworthy. With Bentham the altruistic impulses are still scarcely admitted, as he contemplates society as a mere aggregate of jostling individuals. Virtue is scarcely intelligible, for he identifies the moral with the 'popular' sanction, and says that 'popular' is the best name as most indicative of the constituent causes.¹ That is, virtue means simply the average belief of mankind as to what will produce the greatest quantity of happiness. Though the doctrine may be, in a sense, true, it is but a rough approximation to any tenable theory upon the subject.

140. The attempt to found a scientific system of morality was thus doomed—not indeed to failure, for it stimulated further enquiries—but to remain in the stage of crude empiricism. That it produced so vast an impression is due to the fact that it was in reality a first step towards a more systematic and satisfactory conception, and to the other fact, that the doctrines which it opposed were not really better founded, though put forward with pretensions which, while claiming a loftier origin, were becoming rapidly untenable. Bentham's influence on morality was destructive of many phantoms

¹ See vol. i. 'Principles of Morals' &c. p. 14, and 'Table of Springs of Action,' p. 195.

which were still going about in spite of Hume's more searching scepticism, and if its constructive efficacy was not great in the sphere of speculation, it encouraged the adoption of profounder methods. Mr. Mill describes in his 'Autobiography' the immense effect which the perusal of one of Bentham's treatises produced upon his mind, by holding out prospects of useful effort in the cause of mankind. With all Bentham's faults, he gave a vast stimulus, if only through his disciples, to others who were wearied of the old effete assumptions, and longing for more fruitful methods of enquiry. But here, again, I must pause on the threshold of a new era. To discuss the relations of Benthamism to the scientific morality of which we may hope that later thinkers have at least laid the foundations, is a task not here to be attempted.

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CHAPTER X.

POLITICAL THEORIES.

I. INTRODUCTORY.

1. AT some future day, if the aspirations of philosophers are justified, there will be a science of sociology. We shall unravel the laws of growth of the social organism, and determine the condition of its health or disease. Then, and not till then, it will be possible to present political science as a coherent body of doctrines, deduced from certain axioms of universal validity, but leading to different conclusions according to the varying conditions of human society. We shall be able to say what form of government is most favourable to the happiness of a nation at any given period of its development. Then we shall have at once a firm base for our speculations, and the utmost possible flexibility in their application. We shall see how to reconcile justice and expediency; and establish the rights of man, not as conflicting with considerations of utility, but as logical consequences of the laws of social health. Hitherto, reasoning has been alternately purely empirical and purely abstract. Political machinery, of a more or less satisfactory kind, has evolved itself out of the blind conflict of selfish or patriotic passions. Institutions which enable men to secure the main objects of life have been slowly established; and a few empirical principles have come to be widely accepted, though not yet combined into any satisfactory system. But we are still so far from possessing anything like a science of politics, that most of the current maxims involve conceptions which could hardly find place in a scientific system. Fragments of the old theories by which men endeavoured to explain the origin of government, or to show how it might be best administered, still perplex our discussions, and hinder the attempt to lay a sound foundation of theory.

2. The difficulty of discovering anything approaching to an historical development of political theory is the greater, inasmuch as theories have followed, more than they have guided, events. Happy is the nation which has no political philosophy, for such a philosophy is generally the offspring of a recent, or the symptom of an approaching, revolution. During the quieter hours of the eighteenth century Englishmen rather played with political theories than seriously discussed them. The interest in politics was chiefly personal. References to general principles are introduced in rhetorical flourishes, but do not form the basis of serious argument. In the mass of pamphlets and speeches which fill our library shelves it is rare to find even a show of political philosophy. The Tory argument is that De Foe has been put in the pillory; the Whig argument is that the French wear wooden shoes. Walpole's friends rail at the Pope and the Pretender; and Bolingbroke's friends abuse the Excise and the Hanoverian subsidies. Generalities about liberty, corruption, and luxury are equally convenient for filling the interstices of either set of arguments. To discover from such materials what are the real political views of the writer would be a difficult task; and the investigation belongs rather to the historian of facts than to the historian of thought. In the earlier part of the century there are but one or two books which fairly belong to the speculative order; and even in the more stirring times which preceded the French Revolution the political philosophy of the time is generally imbedded in discussions of concrete facts. A brief account of the few writers who refer most distinctly to general principles will sufficiently indicate the general set of the currents of political thought.

3. In the absence not only of a science of sociology, but of a belief that such a science was possible, men might fall back upon the old theological synthesis. Here, as in ethical speculations, the hypothesis of a divine interference simplified all questions. If the king was the representative of the Deity in secular as the priest in ecclesiastical matters, all discussion was at an end. In a sense higher than the technical the king could do no wrong; his right to rule could never be impugned. The great convulsions which followed the Refor-

mation had rudely broken down any such theories. The relation between the secular and the spiritual power became perplexed and often opposed; and Jesuits had written in defence of tyrannicide when kings were against the Pope. When Filmer maintained the divine right of kings, he found it necessary to attack the great Catholic theologians, Bellarmine and Suarez. The Church of England, indeed, clung as long as it could to some fragment of the theory. Clergymen rivalled each other in preaching the doctrine of unconditional submission till the Church and king quarrelled, and none but a few Jacobites could adhere to the old creed. The Hanoverian dynasty was too obviously endowed with no divine sanctity. George I. was clearly not the representative of God Almighty; and the disappearance with Queen Anne of the quaint superstition of touching for the evil marked the extinction of the last fragments of the belief in the special sanctity of kings.

4. But what theory was to replace the old? If we substitute the abstract metaphysical Deity for the personal Ruler of the universe, we have the same difficulty which occurs in the ethical speculations. God, when identified with nature, sanctions all instincts and all forces alike. And thus we obtain the political theories (for the two are strikingly alike) of Hobbes and Spinoza, in which right is identified with might. The moralists who desired an absolute basis of speculation, and yet shrank from the immoral consequences of this identification, thought, as we have seen, that an absolute law of nature might be constructed from certain 'inherent and immutable relations of things.' Applying the same method to politics, we find certain inalienable rights of man corresponding to the immutable laws of morality, and following from the essential relations of human beings to each other and to God. The primary rules have an absolute character, and are discoverable either by intuition or by an *a priori* method of reasoning entirely independent of experience. The difficulty, however, of crossing the gulf which separates such transcendental regions from concrete institutions was greater in the case of political than in that of ethical speculations. The rule, do as you would be done by, might seem to rank with mathematical axioms; any rule applicable to political

constitutions, unless indeed Hobbes's theory of the absolute power of the sovereign was accepted, required too many qualifications to be capable of such absolute statement. The passage from the abstract to the concrete was therefore effected by the help of the social compact theory, which appears to have had its origin in the speculations of Roman jurists.¹ The convenience of the theory is obvious. To obtain an absolute relation between human beings, you may appeal to the law revealed by an authority absolute because divine. When this power is too vaguely conceived to be capable of originating a political constitution, the most obvious legal analogy is that of a compact whose binding force does not appear to be dependent on the will of any superior. Thus, it was possible to find an absolute basis for political theory, whilst the imaginary compact allowed for the development of certain special rules applicable to concrete societies.

5. The social contract theory was indeed necessarily of the most elastic kind. Amongst the absolute thinkers it marked the passage from a supposed state of nature into a social state. The compact into which men entered by abandoning part of their natural liberty in consideration of certain advantages remained unalterably binding upon all subsequent generations, and thus gave rise to those rights of man which have a superior validity to any rights conferred by later legislation. No human legislation could override them; though the widest possible difference of opinion unfortunately existed as to the precise code thus unalterably fixed. The laws had thus the absolute character of a scientific 'law of nature,' and yet were sufficiently specific to afford grounds of distinguishing between different concrete cases. But in the mouths of a different school the same compact was unconsciously used for quite a different purpose. It signified that compact which was assumed to have taken place in any particular nation. It might vary indefinitely according to circumstances, and be the foundation as well of a democracy as of a despotism. It was used, that is, not to preserve the absolute character of certain laws, but to justify the most purely empirical methods. The compact sanctioned any existing constitution, and was at

¹ See Sir H. Maine's 'Ancient Law,' ch. ix.

most valuable as appearing to condemn arbitrary and violent changes. It gave a vague but useful sanction to the existing order, whatever that order might happen to be. Thus it might at times be convenient to thinkers who admitted that political theories were to be tested solely by experience. In the absence of any satisfactory conception of political development, that test was necessarily applied in the crudest fashion. Politics, it may be said, were regarded from the statical, instead of the dynamical, point of view. In other words, the forces by which a government was maintained were not held to express the relations between the different parts of a growing organism, but the conditions of equilibrium of a cunningly balanced machine. It had been suddenly called into existence by some mythical legislator, who had pieced it together and determined its character. The ancient generalisation had divided all governments into monarchical, aristocratical, and democratical. Each form had its vices and virtues, its principle of life and of decay, upon which Aristotle was the great authority, and was to be considered absolutely without reference to conditions of time, place, and development. Permanence and not progress was the highest possible merit of a government. As a human machine it was liable to decay, and indeed, at some time or other, decay was inevitable. To arrange the machine so that, when once set going, it might continue to work smoothly as long as possible, was the great problem of legislators. Venice seems to have been the favourite model of such reasoners; but they had an abundant supply of classical instances to illustrate their arguments.

6. Each of these theories thus recognised an important truth. The metaphysical theory of absolute rights recognised the truth that a political system should ultimately rest on some surer foundation than the fancy of the day, or the contrivance of politicians. The theory of the three elementary forms of government recognised the necessity of appealing to experience and history, though history was still too little organised to enable the appeal to be made effectually. The two theories are, of course, strangely combined and distorted by partisans of conflicting opinions; and even when any coherent theory was accepted, it was frequently obscured by

the personal prejudices of the day. I must endeavour to show how, beneath the shifting sands of party dispute, some deeper foundation was to be found, and how, to some extent, the ultimate logic of the dispute governed the immediate manifestations of personal animosities.

II. THE PRINCIPLES OF 1688.

7. Locke expounded the principles of the Revolution of 1688, and his writings became the political bible of the following century. They may be taken as the formal apology of Whiggism. He gave the source from which later writers drew their arguments, and the authority to which they appealed in default of arguments. That authority vanished when the French Revolution brought deeper questions for solution, and new methods became necessary in politics as in all other speculation. But during the eighteenth century Locke's theories gave his countrymen such philosophical varnish as was necessary for the embellishment of political pamphlets and parliamentary rhetoric. Their success was partly due to the fact that, like the revolution which they justified, they are a compromise between inconsistent theories. The characteristic quality of Locke's mind is shown in the tenacity with which he adheres to certain principles which seem to work in practice, though they fit rather awkwardly into any logical framework. His doctrine is explained in the 'Treatises on Government' (1690), and in the letters on 'Toleration' (1689). The 'Treatises on Government' are an answer to poor Sir R. Filmer. In the first treatise he disposes, at rather wearisome length, of his opponent's ingeniously absurd doctrine that kings derive their power by direct inheritance from Adam's personal authority over his immediate descendants. As a specimen of the way in which a powerful mind can tear a flimsy fallacy to pieces, the argument may have its interest. But we tire of seeing a strong man deliberately picking to pieces the minutest reticulations of a web of sophistry long since gone to utter decay, instead of summarily brushing it aside. Merciful critics have seen in Filmer's arguments a distortion of the historical theory of the patriarchal origin of

government. The form which the theory took in his hands was, at all events, so absurd that one wonders at Locke's condescending to a serious refutation. A still more elaborate reply is given in Algernon Sidney's 'Discourses on Government'—a book which shows wide reading and some power of style, but of which we must charitably hope that its incessant repetitions and voluminous insistence upon particular points would have been expunged had the author published it in his lifetime. I need not linger upon an argument which, without the assaults of Locke and Sidney, would have died a natural death at the Revolution. It is enough to note that an incidental remark in this part of Locke's¹ treatise implies that, to his mind, it was an exhaustive division of all theories of government, to say that power must be founded either on a divine grant, on paternal authority, or on compact. As, in Filmer's version of the doctrine, the first two theories are identical, we are reduced to the alternative of regarding government as a matter of positive divine appointment, and regarding it as a matter of compact. Locke, like Sidney, unhesitatingly accepts the compact theory, which, stamped by his authority, became the orthodox Whig doctrine.

8. What, then, is Locke's version of the compact? What are its terms? How are they to be discovered, and why are they binding? Hobbes, to whom it is remarkable that Locke makes no explicit reference, interprets the compact as giving absolute power to the sovereign. Locke's special purpose is to prove that the sovereign's authority is limited by the terms of the compact. He therefore interprets it in such a fashion as to make it almost identical with the utilitarian formula. Since government exists for the good of the people, so his argument seems frequently to run, a law or a constitution must be judged simply by its conformity to that end. But Locke can never divest himself of the belief that the compact is somehow necessary to give a sound basis for his theories. Utility is doubtless, in some sense, the ultimate test; but utility must be embodied in a compact before the test can be applied. He is hampered by the reappearance of this imaginary compact, which occasionally clashes with the purpose for which it was designed. Yet, to defend a system simply as

¹ 'Treatise of Government,' i. sec. 96.

useful, seemed to relegate the whole political theory to the region of pure empiricism; and the compact, however useful in reality, could never be frankly cast aside. A curious complexity is thus introduced into his arguments, characteristic of the strange incapacity of so vigorous a mind to free itself from this relic of a metaphysical method.

9. Locke, like his predecessors, regards the compact as marking the transition from a 'state of nature,' but his state of nature differs materially from that of Hobbes. So far from being a state of anarchy, it has a 'law of nature to govern which obliges everyone;' ¹ and that law is reason. According to Hobbes, promises are not binding in a state of nature; according to Locke, they are binding, 'for truth and keeping of faith belongs to men as men, and not as members of society.'² Indeed, Locke's state of nature is almost the ideal state; he speaks of the 'golden age'³ in an apparently historical sense, and regards government as introduced by the 'ambition and luxury of future ages.'³ The difference is characteristic. With Hobbes or Spinoza, though in very different senses, God becomes an expression for the absolute; he is the equal source of all phenomena, and right is necessarily identified with might. The God of Locke, less severe and abstract, is capable of taking a side in human affairs; desiring the happiness of men, he gives them a definite rule; the God-given reason teaches us that we should not harm the 'life, health, liberty, or possessions'⁴ of each other, for men are the creatures of an infinitely wise Maker, and the servants of a sovereign Master. Thus God is retained to supply the necessary sanction to the social compact. The terms of the compact are that we should do good to each other; the reason for obeying it that God orders us to cultivate happiness as much as possible. The divine sanction does not apply to any particular form of government; and the will of God is to be inferred, as in the doctrine of the utilitarian theologians, by observing what causes produce the greatest amount of happiness. The imagination is thus satisfied by a supposed absolute basis, though the decision in any given case is left to experience.

¹ Treatise ii. sec. 6.

³ *Ib.* sec. 111.

² *Ib.* sec. 14.

⁴ *Ib.* sec. 6.

10. This doctrine may, of course, lapse into simple utilitarianism. Paternal authority, for example, is justified simply on the ground that the care of parents is necessary for helpless children.¹ The obligations of marriage are defined by purely utilitarian considerations. It ought to be permanent in the human species because the infant does not, as in other species, become independent before another infant is born; and the bond regarded exclusively as a means of protecting the family is prolonged, at least, during the period of childbearing and the infancy of the children. The willingness to take the lower animals into account, and the strict limitation of the validity of marriage by considerations of immediate expediency, indicate the thoroughgoing utilitarian of the empirical school. In the sphere of pure politics, Locke naturally applies the same doctrine to the defence of the principles involved in the Revolution. He insists in the strongest terms on the responsibility of all officials to the community; ² he justifies the sacred right of insurrection in language which would be fully applicable to the American War of Independence or the French Revolution; and enunciates with vigour the duty of a people whose rulers desert their trust, to make an 'appeal to heaven.'³

11. But vigorously as Locke can put the utilitarian argument, we become sensible that it somehow fails to give him complete satisfaction. He wants some binding element to supplement the mere shifting considerations of expediency. We constantly meet with rights of an indefeasible nature, which have somehow obtained an authority independent of the source from which they are derived. He is forced to alternate between simple utilitarianism and an odd system of legal fictions. A general, he says, may hang a soldier for deserting his post, but may not take from him a farthing of his estate; ⁴ and he gives the simple and satisfactory reason that one power is necessary to, whilst the other has no connection with, the good of the community. But he cannot answer the question: What right has a state to punish an alien for crimes committed in its jurisdiction? without this unlucky compact.

¹ Treatise ii. sec. 58.

² Ib. sec. 152.

³ Ib. sec. 168, and ch. xix. of the 'Dissolution of Government.'

⁴ Ib. sec. 139.

Punishment is not right because useful, but because transgressing the law of nature, 'the offender declares himself to live by another rule than that of reason and comity.'¹ Why may I kill a thief who wants only to take my money? Because he 'has put himself into a state of war with me.'² In such cases the legal fiction leads us on a roundabout path to the same conclusion as the argument from expediency; but elsewhere the perplexity becomes more intricate. Locke's teaching about slavery, for example, is curiously uncertain for so determined an advocate of human rights. In the Constitutions of Carolina, drawn by him in 1669, though they, perhaps, do not represent opinions in all respects, the freemen are invested with absolute authority over their negro slaves.³ In his theoretical discussions he adopts the doctrine that a man cannot make himself a slave, because he cannot give away that which he does not possess—namely, the power over his own life; but adds that slavery must be justified as the continuance of a state of war between a lawful conqueror and a captive. Here, it is evident that Locke, unable to see through the old metaphysical argument, has entirely abandoned the utilitarian test, and forgotten the noblest part of his own theory. The justification of slavery jars strangely with a confutation of claims to arbitrary power. A more elaborate specimen of the same perplexity occurs in the chapter devoted to the origin of government by conquest. A rightful conqueror, he thinks, has power over the lives of the conquered, but not over their possessions—a doctrine which he expects to startle his readers, not as all too giving too much to the conqueror, but as putting him under some restrictions.⁴ The conqueror, indeed, has a right to be paid for damages; but he argues ingeniously to show that they can seldom or never amount to the fee simple of the land.⁵ And he concludes that, at any rate, the descendants of the conquered must be freed from all liability. Every man is born free, and with a right to inherit his father's goods.⁶ The social contract is indispensable as a ground for the commonest rights. When it is broken by a state of violence, any violence is justifiable; though elsewhere war becomes

¹ Treatise ii, sec. 8.² Works, ix. 196.³ Ib. sec. 184.⁴ Ib. sec. 18.⁵ Treatise ii, sec. 180.⁶ Ib. sec. 190.

merely a quasi-legal process for the recovery of damages. He can only try, however, to limit it as much as possible, when it leads to results shocking to his sense of justice.

12. It is strange to see a man of such vast intellectual vigour, and, above all, with so firm a grasp of facts, allowing himself to be trammelled with this vexatious figment. It worries him and perplexes all his reasoning. It has to be alternately stretched and narrowed, and involves the most inconvenient hypotheses. And yet it evidently presented itself to him as the only alternative to a theory of arbitrary power. He is troubled for a time by the obvious suggestion that no such compact was ever made in an historical sense. Locke tries to support himself, as Sidney does with a much greater show of historical knowledge, by referring to special cases, such as Rome and Venice,¹ and to certain persons mentioned by Justin, who 'went away from Sparta with Palantus';² but he admits that, historically speaking, government probably arose from the paternal power, though, in all cases, it implied a trust for the good of the governed.³ But not only was the contract never made, but it would not, by Locke's own showing, have been binding if it had been made. The obligation could not be inherited. He maintains that every man has an indefeasible right to choose his own sovereign. By the practice of governments themselves, he argues, 'as well as by the law of right reason, a child is born a subject of no country or government.'⁴ Here we seem to be led straight to anarchy. If no man can be lawfully governed, except by his own individual consent, all government is a mere rope of sand. The bond, therefore, has to be patched up again by the familiar expedient of a tacit consent. A man who has expressly consented to the rule of any commonwealth 'is perpetually and indefeasibly obliged to be and remain unalterably a subject of it.'⁵ But a tacit consent is given by every owner of property; for so long as a man enjoys the protection of the laws which defend his property, he tacitly consents to be a subject of the commonwealth which imposes the laws. He may, indeed, at any time sell his property, and join any other commonwealth, or set up a commonwealth in the desert. The allegiance

¹ Treatise II. sec. 102.

³ *Ib.* sec. 110.

⁵ *Ib.* sec. 121.

² *Ib.* sec. 103.

⁴ *Ib.* sec. 118.

which in the first case is unalterable, becomes in the second analogous to membership of a joint-stock company.

13. The doctrine is worked out in an elaborate form in one of his most ingenious chapters. In discussing the origin of property we come to the ultimate form of this Protean compact, which seems so strangely to alternate between reality and fiction. Property, according to Locke, exists antecedent to the formation of civil society, which was devised chiefly with a view to its protection. It has a character independent of any human conventions, and, therefore, supplies a basis from which they may be inferred. Man has a right to monopolize part of the earth, which has been bestowed upon the race by God, because man has a right to his own labour, and, therefore, to anything 'he hath mixed his labour with.'¹ A savage acquires a right to an acorn by the simple act of picking it up. In cultivated countries the chief value of land is that which has been added to it by labour; and a man has a right to so much as he can cultivate. He has 'annexed to it something' which was exclusively his own property;² and in this way 'right and conveniency went together, for as a man had a right to all he could employ his labour upon, so he had no temptation to labour for more than he could make use of. As before absolute rights seemed to involve anarchy, so now they seem to involve communism; and here again we escape by means of a tacit compact. Money is in this case the outward sign of the agreement. The use of money enables people to hold more land than they can cultivate by enabling them to exchange the surplus products; and as money is not perishable, a man may keep as much as he pleases without injury to society by useless waste. The expedient is in some sense arbitrary, as money has but a 'fantastical imaginary value' and as it has been adopted by 'a tacit and voluntary consent' that right implies a right to the necessary consequences of that expedient—namely, the inequality of possession. Thus the use of money enables us to escape from the universal equality which would seem to be the teaching of the law of nature. The tacit consent to the division of property becomes the main element, if not the whole substance, of the original

¹ Treatise ii. sec. 27.

³ *Ib.* sec. 51.

² *Ib.* sec. 32.

⁴ *Ib.* sec. 184.

act. Government, he says in one place, 'has no other end at the preservation of property.'¹ Elsewhere this is 'the great and chief end of men's entering into commonwealths.'² The theory, though it runs through the Treatise, is mixed with discordant elements; but the nearest approach to a definite statement of Locke's ultimate conclusions seems to be that this mysterious compact, which is the binding force of the whole social order, is in fact the tacit consent of mankind to the inequality of property, as implied in the use of money, and made necessary by the corruption which followed the golden age.

14. Only in this perplexed manner could the sturdy sense of Locke manage to utter its protest against tyranny. Nothing, one might think, would be easier than to cut away all the factitious bonds which so trammel the strong man. The utility, whatever it may be, which Locke represents as the consideration contemplated in this strange bargain, made nowhere in particular, and which he only avoids calling 'non-existent' by the simple expedient of using the word 'tacit,' is always, as far as it goes, a valid argument for justifying existing arrangements. On the whole, Locke would have said the acceptance of the complex inequalities of the social order is a necessary condition for avoiding the worse evils of barbarism. But the plain reason seemed to him insufficient till it was twisted into the shape of a bargain. That formula seemed to give a binding force wanting in the naked statement of utility. By Locke's contemporaries the assertion that government rested in some sense on compact or consent was valued for itself, though they cared little for the refinements by which the unreal hypothesis was accommodated to the facts. They were parting company for ever with the vine right of kings. Filmer's theories were read by the light of James II.'s practical expositions, and the king's blundering tyranny crushed them more effectually than the philosopher's logic. Political speculators blundered strangely in trying to frame a theoretical formula for this practical revolt against injustice. The social contract was an importation to the sphere of speculation of the ordinary system of legal fictions. As old laws were bent and twisted into pure

¹ Treatise ii sec. 94.

² *Ib.* sec. 124.

non-meaning before they were finally cast aside, men clung to this last relic of the obsolete methods before they could resolve to trust wholly to experience. Any analogy would serve which deprived kings of arbitrary power. Regarded as managers of a joint-stock company, or as the tacitly appointed guardians of property, they were at least confined by the terms of their trust within some definite limits.

15. The theory, complex and unsatisfactory as it became when severely scrutinised, gave a temporary resting-place. And thus we naturally find in Locke's ingenious hypothesis the curious points of contact, both with the theories from which it borrowed and those which were raised upon his foundation. He continually invokes the authority of Hooker, who had found the compact convenient under somewhat analogous circumstances. The Whigs, in their turn, appealed to Locke as the great supporter of their favourite dogma. At times it takes forms which remind us of his special interpretation. The connection, for example, upon which Locke insists between property in land and the supposed compact appears in a popular shape in various writings, as in De Foe's treatise 'On the Original Power of the People of England.'¹ De Foe argues that the freeholders have a natural right to govern the country, inasmuch as all its other inhabitants live 'upon sufferance;' and if the king were sole landlord he would be naturally absolute. The revolutionary party found their account in the doctrine as expanded for a very different purpose by Rousseau; and they could quote from Locke very sweeping assertions as to the natural equality and liberty of mankind. The utilitarians again might appeal to him as frequently sanctioning their method. Though it scarcely touches upon constitutional details, some of the incidental arguments, and the importance which he attaches to the separation of the legislative from the 'executive and federative' powers, may remind us of Montesquieu.¹ He was one of the first writers to attack the anomaly of rotten boroughs, a grievance which, in his opinion, could only be remedied by the direct action of the sovereign.² But, without descending into minutiae, his chief influence was in popularising a convenient formula for enforcing the responsibility

¹ Treatise ii. ch. xii.

² *Ib.* sec. 157.

of governors. The social compact did well enough to oppose to such as Filmer and the little band of nonjurors. We shall soon see what strange efficacy lay in its later developments.

16. Another application of Locke's principles was, in one sense, the most important. The great principle of toleration had been asserted, though with characteristic incompleteness, by the English leaders of 1688. Dissent was no longer criminal, though it was exposed to various disqualifications. The admission that the Scottish people had a right to their own form of Church government made it difficult—especially after the Union—to revive the old principles of the duty of the State to support any particular Church as the sole depository of the truth. On one side, therefore, none except the small and declining party represented by the nonjurors could regard the Church of England as a divine institution, authorised to command the support of the State. On the other hand, the modern doctrine of 'a free Church in a free state,' the theory, that is, that a Church is merely a voluntary association, with which the laws have simply no concern, was equally incompatible with facts. Both logical extremes were untenable by anybody who professed, as everybody did profess, to be tolerably satisfied by the existing compromise. The old spirit of ecclesiastical domination was still strong enough to find vehement utterance in the early part of the century, as was shown by the Sacheverel agitation and the Bangorian controversy. The revolutionary party laid down antagonistic principles which should have involved the complete separation of Church and State. But the abstract principles had to be guarded by qualifications and reserves corresponding to the compromise actually adopted.

17. The theory of toleration involves some of the most complex of political problems. The controversy, in fact, lies upon the border between the two great fields of discussion, political and religious, and arouses all the passions involved in either. The protest against the persecuting spirit might embody itself in a religious, a moral, or a political doctrine. There are three main reasons against burning a man for disbelieving in Transubstantiation. In the first place, it may be said, the doctrine of Transubstantiation is nonsense. If, secondly, this be denied, the persecutor, it may be said, is as

likely to be wrong as his victim. And, thirdly, even if the doctrine be true, burning its opponents does not prove it to be true, and is therefore not a fair method of propagating the truth. This last gives the moral objection to the practice; but it may well be doubted whether it would ever have prevailed without the help of the sceptical objection. If the general belief in the evil of heresy were comparable in intensity to our belief in the evil of small-pox, one would be stamped out as vigorously as the other; but the most ordinary minds can see the objection to propagating by force a faith which they do not really hold. When toleration, whether founded upon indifference or moral principle, has become part of the political creed, there still remains another series of problems. Granting that the secular power should not punish heretics, can it, and, if so, should it, assume a position of complete neutrality? Can the spiritual and the secular code work side by side without interfering, and if they must interfere, how can their relative claims be adjusted?

Locke's position is given in the 'Letters on Toleration,' the first of which sufficiently indicates his position. The others, devoted to meeting the cavils of an antagonist, consist chiefly of incessant and wearisome repetitions of the same arguments. As in his other controversies, Locke has no mercy upon the patience of his readers.

18. The main points, however, are obvious. Locke does not say that the Thirty-nine Articles are false, but he makes the modest assumption that they are of human origin. Infallibility, if credible, supplies an unassailable ground for persecution. If the voice of a church be the voice of God, it may equally define theological dogmas, and prescribe the mode of propagating dogmas. For Locke such a theory is out of the question. True Christianity, according to him, is to be found in all the churches, though in all the churches it is overlaid with rites and dogmas varying indefinitely, and therefore uncertain. A man will not be damned, as he urges in the 'Reasonableness of Christianity,' for preferring a black gown to a white surplice, or for losing his head in settling the relative limits of nature and grace. If he will not be damned for going astray on such matters, he ought not to be burnt for it. Persecution by a fallible church, it is generally said, must

be illogical. If so, it might be replied, all punishment by fallible men is illogical, for I may be as certain of the falsity of an opinion as of the bad tendency of a practice. But, on Locke's tacit assumption that all the churches—or, at least, all the Protestant churches—differed only in matters of minor importance, and in matters of which one man is as good a judge as another, the argument against persecution is conclusive.

19 The question, however, may be pushed further. A thorough rationalist holds that reason is not merely the sole test of truth, but should be the sole instrument of conversion. Locke's favourite mode of stating this argument is by forcing upon his antagonist the conclusion that, if a Christian ruler may persecute, so may a Mahommedan : if the king of England, then the king of France. As, on any hypothesis, error has a majority on its side, this is to say that truth must generally be persecuted. This argument, again, is not logically unassailable ; for it is at least a conceivable theory that persecution is right for the orthodox and wrong for the heterodox. But, from Locke's point of view, the mode of evasion would be hardly worth refutation. The opinion that it was the duty of all rulers in all parts of the world to force men to belong to the Church of England was scarcely tenable even by the most bigoted of nonjurors. He probably held that the Articles included much error ; he certainly held that they included much that was open to fair difference of opinion ; and, therefore, the Church was so far from being justified in claiming to force its opinions upon men as an established body of definitive truth, that it was rather the duty of the Church to encourage every sincere enquirer, and, without admitting any given dogma to be wrong, to admit that all required constant and free discussion from every point of view.

20. Locke's argument thus includes a sceptical element ; that is to say, a denial that religious certainty had as yet been obtained, or could be attained, so far as to justify the State in using force. But the moral argument is equally forcible if we make a still smaller concession to the rationalist. Grant that innocent error in religious matters is possible ; grant also that a man is bound to speak the truth as to his religious

beliefs ; and it follows that persecution implies punishment of men for an action which the punisher admits to be virtuous. This, indeed, is so far an unassailable ground. Locke's antagonist tries to meet the argument by a foolish distinction, which Locke exposes at far more length than it deserves, as to penalties being intended, not to make men believe, but to make them consider their beliefs attentively. The quibble is too feeble to require Locke's serious reply. Laws must sometimes be enforced in spite of conscientious objections ; but it is at least a grave objection to any law that it compels a man to do what the legislator admits to be wrong. Force is no argument ; and burning may make a hypocrite, but cannot make a true believer. It may produce 'outward conformity,'¹ but not, in its direct effects at least, inward conformity. Therefore, it is a detestable weapon in religious controversy.

21. Locke thus triumphantly establishes a proposition, already accepted by all the greatest Englishmen of his generation, and never seriously contested in later days ; the proposition, namely, that the State should not attempt to propagate creeds by force. The common sense of the laity was emphatically saying through his lips to the clergy, We won't do your dirty work any longer. We don't half believe your creeds ; we are quite clear that they are not worth the price of punishing honest men for disbelieving them. You shall have fair play, and trust, like other people, to argument. If you can convert us by reason, well and good ; if not, don't think that we will fill up the gaps in your logic by the stake, the prison, or by fines. The sects are harmless enough if left to themselves. Some people combine for trade, others for amusement. 'Neighbourhood joins some and religion others. But there is one thing only which gathers people into seditious communions, and that is oppression.'² A noble saying, and backed by undeniable truths. The real quarrel with the dissenters was, as Locke adds, that 'they are ill-used, and therefore they are not to be suffered.'² Put them on an equality with their fellow-subjects, and the government will have a far higher guarantee for general content than can be extracted from the most systematic oppression.

22. Locke, as I have said, makes throughout the tacit

¹ Locke's Works, v. 323, and elsewhere.

² *Ib.* p. 50.

assumption implied in these words. The various churches are, in fact, harmless, so long as they are not oppressed. Quakers, Anabaptists, Independents, Presbyterians, and the whole series of Protestant sects, will do no harm to you if you will do no harm to them. But suppose that this assumption should not be verified? If there be a creed which preaches mischievous doctrines, are we still bound to be tolerant? The difficulty of the problem is indicated by two remarkable exceptions. Atheists, says Locke, 'are not at all to be tolerated,'¹ for they deny the only principle in virtue of which human relations are possible. Nor have papists a right to toleration (though he does not explicitly say that they are not to be tolerated), so far as they hold the doctrine of keeping no faith with heretics, or acknowledge the supremacy of another ruler.² The distinction seems to imply the general proposition that an opinion may be rightfully suppressed if it is incompatible with allegiance to the state. This evidently introduces a whole series of political problems, which are not adequately discussed by Locke. Suppose, for example, that a man refuses to obey the law on the ground of a religious scruple. Is he to be excused? No; says Locke, a private person must submit to the punishment, if it is 'within the verge of the magistrate's authority.'³ Otherwise—as in the case of the magistrate enforcing a strange religion—he is bound to resist. What, then, are the proper limits of the magistrate's authority?

23. This undoubtedly, is amongst the most delicate of problems. It is one, I may add, to which any solution based upon absolute and unalterable principles is necessarily inadequate. The limits of the legitimate application of state authority depend (so, at least, I should maintain) upon the stage of social development. We may say that, under given conditions of intellectual, moral, and social order, the magistrate ought, or ought not, to interfere in such matters, for example, as education, which implies certain religious assumptions. To draw the line accurately, to say in what cases the magistrate is, or is not, overstepping his proper functions to assume those of the priest or of the private individual, is a matter of great nicety even at the present day. To lay down

¹ Locke's Works, v. 47.

² *Ib.* pp. 45-7.

³ *Ib.* p. 43.

a fixed rule as equally applicable to all past and present cases, is to sin against the first principles of sound political reasoning. But this doctrine, true or false, was not perceptible from Locke's point of view. Some absolute rule must be discovered to serve as a definite bound to the encroachments of the state. Locke, of course, found it, where he found all other principles, in the social compact. The social compact has long been obsolete, but the doctrines which it covered became the permanent creed of the Whigs, and were accepted more systematically both by the English utilitarians and the French revolutionists.

24. The doctrine may be summarily exhibited. The state rests upon the voluntary consent of mankind to trust the magistrate with powers necessary for the protection of their civil interests, that is to say, their 'life, liberty, health, and indolency of body; and the possession of outward things, such as money, land, houses, furniture, and the like.'¹ A Church is a 'voluntary society of men, joining themselves together of their own accord, in order to the public worshipping of God in such a manner as they judge to be acceptable to him, and effectual to the salvation of their souls.'² The magistrate alone may use force, the Church ruler must confine himself to moral suasion. The last possible spiritual weapon must be excommunication,³ which is simply a separation from the society of the man who refuses to obey its laws. This obviously is to assert expressly the modern principle of 'a free church in a free state.' It seems to be fatal to any establishment of a Church. Locke argues at great length that the use of any force against dissenters logically implies the use of all the force necessary for their conversion.⁴ The same argument would seem to tell equally against all disqualification, and therefore against all privilege. If Locke never drew this conclusion explicitly, he was restrained, not by logic, but by policy or by ignorance.

His antagonist accused him, not unnaturally, of begging the question. Nothing is easier than to infer any conclusion from this elastic social compact. You have only to make its terms, and it may sanction anything. Locke replies by

¹ Locke's Works, v. 10.

² Ib. v. 13.

³ Ib. v. 16.

⁴ Ib. v. 262, &c.

substantially bringing forward the utilitarian ground. The compact, according to his version,¹ amounts to an agreement of men not to hurt each other; a man is not hurt by my being of a different religion; therefore the compact does not include a clause for a common form of worship.

25. If Locke escapes from the charge of arguing in a circle, it is clearly by making an assumption. The assumption is that which is common to all his party. It is substantially that a church, like a 'club for claret,'² has no bearing upon men's duties as members of a state. Macaulay, in our own day, argued against Mr. Gladstone that it was as irrelevant to exact religious tests from members of a political body as from members of a canal company. So Locke tells his antagonist that it does not follow that the state is bound to protect religion any more than the East India Company.³ Locke, indeed, sees the difficulty more distinctly than his successor. The government, like the church, is bound to encourage 'a good life, in which consists not the least part of religion and true piety'⁴—indeed, on Locke's showing, nearly the whole of true religion. Thus, as moral actions come within both provinces, there is a danger of conflict. Locke thinks, however, that, so long as that state confines itself to its true duty, the promotion 'of the temporal good and outward prosperity of the society,'⁵ there is little danger of collision. His doctrine is, in fact, based on the assumption that men were in fact sufficiently agreed upon all moral questions to be able to submit to a common rule in regard to all the matters actually regulated by legislative authority. We can, therefore, pass over the difficult problems which arise in cases where men's views about the fate of their souls make them adopt inconsistent modes of providing for their bodies, or in which the action of the legislators obviously affects more than the body. This assumption, moreover, was sufficiently accurate in regard to the state of things actually contemplated. Religious distinctions had little influence upon practice for generations to come, and Locke's doctrine did well enough for the quiet times of the eighteenth century, though its theoretical basis might be defective. If the social

¹ Locke's Works, v. 212.

² *Ib.* v. 118.

³ *Ib.* v. 48.

⁴ *Ib.* v. 50.

⁵ *Ib.* v. 41.

compact was a fiction, men were, in fact, agreed as to what they wanted from government; and they did not want any interference with their religious practices nor any interference with practices indirectly affected by religious beliefs. So long as this remained true, the social compact did well enough, and when the compact was forgotten, the doctrine that religious controversies were controversies about words was equally favourable to the old solution. Let parsons quarrel about creeds, so long as they support the police, is the true Whig doctrine, and one which answers very fairly in practice. But it does not give a scientific solution of the problem as to the limits of state interference.

26. The sceptical side of such theories is more explicitly given in Tindal's 'Rights of the Christian Church'—a book which earned for its author a foretaste of the indignation afterwards produced by 'Christianity as Old as the Creation.' The social compact, according to Tindal, gives the right to punish the wicked and protect the good. The legislator may, therefore, punish atheists, blasphemers, and profane persons,¹ whose principles or practice encourage crime. He may, further, appoint persons to instruct his subjects to fulfil the duty which he is bound to enforce; ² but, on the other hand, he has no right to enforce opinions not conducive to this purpose, or to tax his subjects to support those who teach them.³ Speculative opinions, which apparently means all opinions except the opinion that God will punish murderers and thieves, must be left to individuals and voluntary societies. This amounts to saying that the clergy ought to be state officials, paid to teach the religion of nature. Tindal, if he had spoken out with perfect frankness, would have endowed his own creed, given it state support, and left men to squabble about the Trinity or Transubstantiation as much as they pleased. His theory strongly resembles that afterwards set forth with greater vigour by Rousseau. The greater part of the book, however, is an attack upon the claims of the high-church party to supernatural privileges in the Church. To admit such a doctrine is, as he argues with much vigour, to allow the contradiction of two supreme powers in the state, and has practically led to all the evils generally attributed by

¹ Tindal, p. 12.² *Ib.* p. 12.³ *Ib.* p. 22.

the deists to priestcraft. Toleration, therefore, in Tindal's mouth, meant simply that priests should not be allowed to burn heretics, because priests were impostors. It is needless to add that priests did not love Tindal. This book and the 'Independent Whig' (1720, &c), a series of essays in the 'Spectator' shape, devoted to the abuse of the clergy, are the best illustration of that antipathy to sacerdotalism, generated during the struggles of the seventeenth century, which survived into the eighteenth, and is not yet upon its deathbed. Toleration, however, softened its bitterness considerably after the early years of the Hanoverian dynasty. The best illustration of the prevailing theories is that Bangorian controversy which was once celebrated, if only as an instance of confusion worse confounded.

III. THE BANGORIAN CONTROVERSY.

27. Benjamin Hoadly was probably the best-hated clergyman of the century amongst his own order. His titles to the antipathy of his brethren were many and indisputable. A clergyman who opposes sacerdotal privileges is naturally the object of a sentiment such as would be provoked by a trades-unionist who should defend the masters, or a country squire who should protect poachers. In Hoadly's day the feeling was specially intense. Dissenters had extorted toleration without obtaining equality, and the old persecuting sentiment survived, though compelled to satisfy itself by comparatively impotent legislation or by exhibitions of social insolence. The advocates of the Church still brooded over the memories of the Great Rebellion, and grudged the claims of the sects which had once trampled them under foot. Hoadly again not only supported the political pretensions of the dissenters, but occupied a very questionable theological position. To attack the exclusive privileges of the Church was, of course, to attack the divine law; but Hoadly was also suspected, and with good apparent reason, of extreme laxity in his theology. The intimate friend and admirer of Clarke, he was probably further from orthodoxy than the great latitudinarian leader. Add to this that Hoadly was not merely a traitor, but a successful traitor; that Convocation, for attempting to silence

him, was itself doomed to silence; and that, according to the system of the day, he rose by several minor preferments to the great bishopric of Winchester. There he remained for more than a quarter of a century, till the controversies of his early life had become a dim tradition with the existing generation, and died in his eighty-fifth year, in 1761. Hoadly hated for all these reasons, had not the manner to conciliate antagonists. His style is the style of a bore; he is slovenly awkward, intensely pertinacious, often indistinct, and, apparently at least, evasive; and occasionally (I am thinking especially of his arguments with his old enemy Atterbury) not free from a tinge of personal rancour. He preached his first lectureship down to 30*l.* a year, as he candidly reports, and then thought it time to resign. A perusal of his writings renders the statement easily credible. The three huge folios which contain his ponderous wranglings are a dreary wilderness of now profitless discussion. We owe, however, a vast debt of gratitude to the bores who have defended good causes, and in his pachydermatous fashion Hoadly did some service, by helping to trample down certain relics of the old spirit of bigotry.

28. Before the controversy to which his fame is chiefly due Hoadly had written some political treatises. The most elaborate are the 'Measures of Submission to the Civil Magistrate,' and 'The Original and Institution of Civil Government discussed.' In them he once more slays the slain. Following in the steps of Locke, to whom, however, he makes but a grudging reference,¹ he argues that Adam's paternal authority over Cain had not been transferred to the King of England, and would not entitle him, if it had been transferred, to burn Protestants in Smithfield. He attacks the Anglican doctrine of non-resistance, which had become obsolete when Anglicans found resistance convenient. He opposes to the patriarchal theory the alternative and equally flimsy theory of a social compact, and labours hard to show that the historical reality of such a compact, though not necessary to the validity of his theory, may be reconciled with the narrow chronological limits of the Book of Genesis. The details of such a discussion may well be swept to the dustheaps. The general tendency needs

¹ Hoadly, Works, ii. 190.

alone to be indicated. Hoadly seems to labour under a singular difficulty in this as in the Bangorian controversy. He is too much in agreement with his antagonist. All but a few irreconcilables admitted after the Revolution of 1688 that resistance was in some cases allowable. Everybody again admitted that resistance was only allowable in very serious cases. The true question was therefore one of degree. What intensity of evil would justify resistance? Such a question is obviously not to be answered by laying down absolute rules. The problem by its very nature belongs to the sphere of expediency, not of abstract truth. And yet absolute rules were very convenient as taunts to an adversary. Thus Hoadly seems alternately to relax and tighten the bonds of obedience. At one moment he says that the people are to judge for themselves only when they are 'on the brink of destruction;' they are only 'to defend themselves against certain ruin;' and not in that case to upset all rule, but to put themselves under a better government for the future.¹ Nobody who admitted of resistance at all could draw the line nearer to unconditional obedience. Elsewhere, Hoadly uses language which seems to imply that the subject ought to resist all laws which in his opinion are wrong. To escape from this consecration of anarchy, he introduces qualifications which neutralise his theory. Like most writers of his class, he can only abolish a pope or a tyrant by making every man his own pope or tyrant. He cannot conceive of an authority resting upon reason, or of a power which may enforce its command, and yet rest its titles to command upon reasonable enquiry; and this difficulty, which still besets many minds, greatly perplexes some of the later Bangorian arguments. Meanwhile, Hoadly alternates between assertions which nobody would deny and assertions which nobody would seriously maintain. Each side found its account in this style of reasoning. Everybody must always obey, cried the Tory; but, he added in a whisper, cases may occur which necessitate resistance. Every man, proclaimed the Whig, should resist when resistance conduces to the public good; but, then, he admitted, it must be remembered that in almost every case resistance causes more injury than the evils which it professes to cure. Such arguments, in fact,

¹ 'Original Institutions' &c. ii. 184.

were well suited to a state of things in which Whig and Tory had an instinctive dislike to each other's principles, but had struck out a very fair compromise in all matters of immediate practical interest.

29. In truth, the instinct was not altogether at fault. Hoadly's dislike to the Tory doctrine rested ultimately on a logical basis which he himself probably did not clearly understand. His whole political and ecclesiastical theories may be summed up in a single formula. He denies the divine-right theory, whether of priests or kings, in the only sense in which it can have any application to a specific political problem. This denial (as I have remarked) is the logical consequence of the deist theory. When God becomes nature, or is so nearly identified with nature that all supernatural interference is incredible, the basis of a divine right of any particular family, caste, or constitution, is destroyed. The divine favour can be no more monopolised by a single form of government than by a single sect or organisation. No man or set of men has received any special commission from the Almighty. That religion is best which is most reasonable, and that system of government which is most useful. Hoadly, in accordance with this view, aims at eradicating all claims to authority which rest upon a basis different from that of utility. There can be no supernatural virtue in kings or priests communicating an indefeasible and paramount claim to authority. Hoadly, indeed, could hardly strike at the root of the theory whilst asserting that God had taken a direct part in the government of the Jews and the foundation of the Church. His doctrine involves the fundamental inconsistency of all the contemporary rationalisers who admitted previous supernatural interventions, whilst denying their actual occurrence in modern times. But in his clumsy and illogical way Hoadly was attacking a theory, then dying, though not yet dead, which endeavoured to provide certain claims to priestly and royal authority with supernatural sanctions, and therefore to base them on the rock of absolute right, whilst the rest of the fabric was founded only on the shifting sands of expediency. Wherever such a claim to supernatural authority is made or implied, Hoadly sees the evil thing; and the most spirited fragment which he ever wrote is an attack upon Protestants

for virtually making claims inconsistent with their repudiation of supernatural authority.

30. The tract is called a 'Dedication to Pope Clement XI.' and was prefixed anonymously to Steele's 'Account of the State of the Roman Catholic Religion throughout the World.' It is written in the ironical style so popular in the days of Swift, Arbuthnot, and De Foe, and claims a close resemblance between Papists and Protestants. All the Protestant sects admit their fallibility, and differ in their conclusions, yet all are ready, within their own limits, to enforce their own opinion by prison or the gallows. The difference is, he says, that 'you *cannot* err in anything you determine, and we never *do*; that is, in other words, that you are infallible, and we always in the right.'¹ And, finally, after summing up various proofs of a persecuting spirit, and of the approximation of the English clergy to Roman superstitions, he concludes the only difference to be that 'ours is Protestant popery, and yours is Popish popery.'² Protestantism, with him, means the unrestricted right of private judgment, and that right excludes all claims to priestly authority; but the true bearing of his arguments comes out more clearly in the Bangorian controversy.

31. This controversy, which raged furiously during 1717-8, is one of the most intricate tangles of fruitless logomachy in the language. In the bibliography given in Hoadly's works there is a list of more than fifty divines who joined in the fray.³ In the course of July 1717 there appeared seventy-four pamphlets.⁴ At one crisis, when the controversy took a personal turn, we are assured that, for a day or two, the common business of the city was at a stand; that little was done on the Exchange, and even that many shops were shut.⁵ The struggle became more and more perplexed, till the precise issue disappeared in a hubbub of confused assertions, contradictions, qualifications, personal imputations, and retorts which soon ceased to be courteous. There is a bewildering variety of theological, ecclesiastical, political, historical, exegetical, and purely personal discussions. The combatants are so

¹ Hoadly's Works, i. 535

² *Ib.* i. 544.

³ *Ib.* ii. p. 398. A continuation of the list is given at the end of vol. i.

⁴ *Ib.* ii. 385

⁵ *Ib.* ii. 429.

fierce, that blows, which need have caused little irritation, produce angry sores. Besides the more serious disputes, we are invited to consider whether Hoadly was justified in keeping a converted Jesuit in his family, and what was the Jesuit's character; whether he had or had not taken the advice of a friend to insert certain phrases in his sermon before it was printed or before it was published; whether Sherlock had said something to much the same purpose as Hoadly in a previous sermon; whether it is proper to describe prayer as 'a calm and undisturbed' address to God; whether we may say that Christ's example is more peculiarly fit for slaves than for subjects, and if so, in what sense, and whether Hoadly spoke in that sense; what is the proper interpretation of various phrases in the New Testament; what was the precise history of the Corporation and Test Acts; and what is the right answer to various questions connected only in the most accidental and indirect fashion with any reasonable topic of dispute. Throughout this troublesome wrangling, we have the annoying circumstance that nobody admits himself to be fairly represented, and that the charge which each man brings with the greatest bitterness against his adversary is that of entire agreement with himself. To follow out the minute reticulations of this tangled skein of argument would be waste of time. The disputants themselves must have regarded it, one fancies in later years, as a lamentable waste of good human passion. The anger has long been cold, and the spoilt paper returned to its primitive elements. Three writers were more conspicuous than the rest, and it will be enough to notice their main positions. Hoadly had the ill-luck to encounter two of the ablest—probably, if Bentley be excepted, the two ablest controversial writers of the time. Sherlock and Lav attacked different parts of his argument with singular vigour and in their writings and Hoadly's we may find whatever deserves to survive the general wreck.

32. Hoadly's theory was first stated in the 'Preservative against the Principles and Practice of Nonjurors' (1716)—a book provoked by the publication of certain posthumous papers of Hickes, the nonjuror. His sermon, preached on March 31st, 1717, which was the immediate cause of the explosion, states it more concisely and distinctly. His various

answers to Snape, Sherlock, and the Committee of Convocation, explain his view of certain obvious objections. Hoadly simply applies to ecclesiastical questions the principle already explained in a political connection. He is lowering the priesthood, as he had formerly lowered the monarchy, to the ordinary level of humanity. He is striking at the heart of sacerdotalism. A priest is one who claims divine authority for his words, whose privileges are secured by a divine grant, and who can wield certain powers in virtue of his sacred character. Hoadly substantially denies the validity of these claims. Though forced to admit that Christ and the Apostles enjoyed supernatural powers and privileges, he denies, like the other rationalists of the time, that those powers had been transmitted to their successors. The expression of the doctrine, as it shaped itself in Hoadly's mind, must be given in his own words.

'As the Church of Christ is the kingdom of Christ, he himself is king; and in this it is implied that he is himself the sole lawgiver to his subjects, and himself the sole judge of their behaviour, in the affairs of conscience and eternal salvation. And in this sense, therefore, his kingdom is not of this world; that he hath in those points left behind him no visible human authority, no vicegerents who can be said properly to supply his place; no interpreters upon whom his subjects are absolutely to depend; no judges over the conscience or religion of his people. For if this were so, that any such absolute vicegerent authority, either for the making of new laws, or interpreting old ones, or judging his subjects, in religious matters, were lodged in any men upon earth, the consequence would be that what still retains the name of the Church of Christ would not be the kingdom of Christ, but the kingdom of those men vested with such authority. For, whoever hath such an authority of making laws is so far a king, and whoever can add new laws to those of Christ, equally obligatory, is as truly a king as Christ himself is. Nay, whosoever hath an absolute authority to interpret any written or spoken laws, it is he who is truly the lawgiver to all intents and purposes, and not the person who first wrote and spoke them.'¹ The viceroy of an absolute monarch is

¹ Hoadly, ii. 404

himself absolute if the monarch never interposes. Interpret ing laws, on the same hypothesis, is but a periphrasis for making laws.

33 So far Hoadly's logic is unimpeachable, though its relevancy might be disputed. His main arguments would have been far more coherent if, instead of attacking the 'absolute,' he had attacked the 'supernatural' authority of the priesthood. In the 'Preservative' he assails the fundamental inconsistency of Protestant sacerdotalism, the attribution to fallible men, or bodies of fallible men, of powers intelligible only on the hypothesis of infallibility, and, therefore, of the continuous intervention of supernatural powers. A church claiming such powers must, as he said, come into conflict with the state; it forms an *imperium in imperio*, and sooner or later one of the rivals must swallow up the other. Resistance to such claims is, therefore, of vital importance to the state. According to Hoadly, the state must have every power necessary for its own preservation; and resistance becomes its imperative duty.¹ This theory, which lies, as we have seen, at the base of his political speculations, would find its full realisation when the state and church were placed, so to speak, on the same level. Their claims would then be commensurable instead of resting in one case on divine and in the other on mere human authority. An equitable distribution of power might be arranged between two corporations, when both allow an appeal to the common tribunal of human reason, judging by motives of expediency. Though Hoadly does not adopt this theory explicitly, his main arguments are those which would naturally arrange themselves in its support. Since the Church is fallible, he says, its decisions cannot possibly affect the relation of man to his Creator. The power of looking into men's hearts, and therefore of pronouncing the forgiveness of sins, might be granted to Peter along with the equally miraculous power of healing the sick; but Atterbury, who could not cure a pope of one twinge of toothache, could certainly not excuse Chartres one minute of hell-fire.² The Church may excommunicate a notorious sinner in the sense of refusing to associate with him, but not in the sense of sentencing him

¹ Hoadly's Works, i. 582, 'Preservative.'

² See specially i. 594, 'Preservative.'